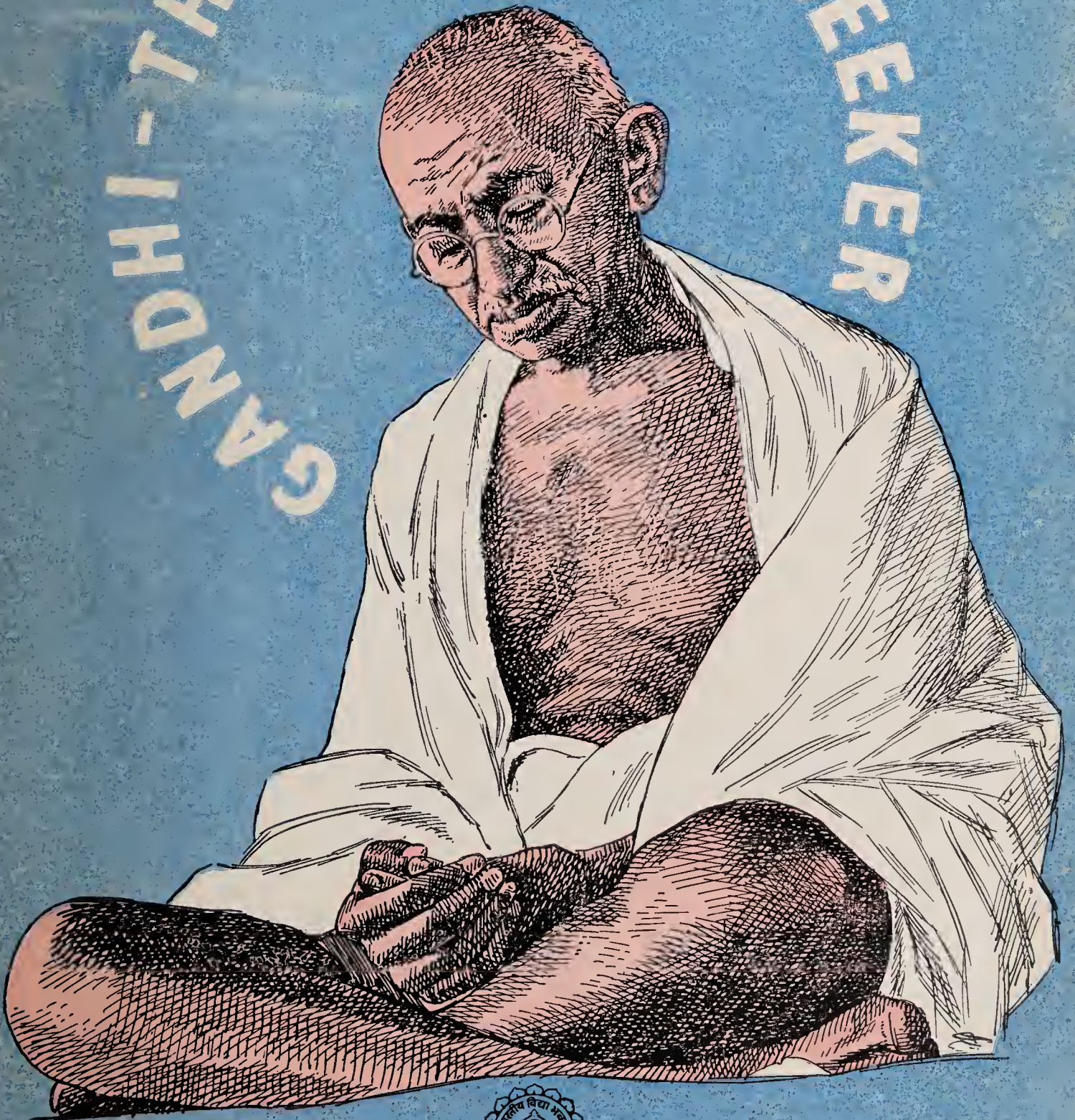


R. R. DIWAKAR

GANDHI - THE SPIRITUAL SEEKER



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY-7



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GANDHI

THE SPIRITUAL SEEKER

By
R. R. DIWAKAR



1964

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is presenting to the reader my talks on Gandhiji at different places. They naturally cover various aspects of his thought and philosophy including those on his spiritual aspiration, Sadhana, and spiritual attainment. I suggested to the Bhavan that the talks may go under the common title 'Gandhi, the Spiritual Seeker'. It is well known that Gandhiji was basically a seeker after truth. He went about it in a scientific spirit. Whatever he thought or did, his one aim was to realise the Truth and live in it. Truth was God for him.

The talks on Gandhiji's Spirituality were delivered at Trivandrum in the Kerala University (11th and 12th of November 1963). Those on the Creative Thought of Gandhiji were given at Varanasi in the Banaras Hindu University (7th and 8th of August 1963). Talks on Gandhiji's Work for the uplift of Women were organised by the Municipal Borough at Baroda and were delivered at the Town Hall (5th and 6th of October 1963).

I, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Bhavan, am grateful to the Kerala and Banaras Hindu Universities as well as to the Municipal Borough of Baroda for allowing the talks to be published by the Bhavan in book form.

R. R. DIWAKAR

BANGALORE

28th January 1964

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1

Gandhi, the Spiritual Seeker

I

GANDHIJI'S SPIRITUAL ASPIRATIONS

Within a few hours of the passing away of the Mahatma on 30th January 1948, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while addressing the vast multitude which had gathered in Birla House in Delhi that evening, said that a light had gone out of our lives and yet that light would shine for a thousand years. On the morrow, while walking about in the premises of the same house, waiting for the mortal remains of the Father of the Nation to be taken out to the banks of the Jamuna, Sardar Patel remarked, "in what better and nobler way could he have died to crown the great saintly life he led!"

Both these utterances have proved prophetic. There is no doubt now that the light of Gandhiji's life would shine for hundreds of years and illumine the path of humanity like that of the Buddha, Mahavir and Christ. There is also no doubt that the martyr's death he died has immortalised him. Seen in the perspective of the history of human values, his fragile body perished, but his indomitable spirit belongs for ever to humanity. It would now feed for ages the flame of the religion of "Truth through Non-Violence".

There cannot be any doubt that Gandhiji was one of the most powerful and magnetic personalities of our times. His was a very eventful life full of action and inspired by the highest of motives. He was a man of mission who ceaselessly fought against whatever evil and injustice came his way but always with soul-force and moral weapons.

Some of his ideals, theories, even actions might be and are controversial and may continue to be so. His economic theories, for instance, are sometimes characterised as archaic. But there cannot be any controversy as regards the power and authority he wielded over vast masses of men and women. It is obvious that his power was not derived from personal charm, or from birth, or from wealth; nor did the secret of his power lay in any political authority or military strength. This power which he exercised entirely and always for the welfare of the people can be described only as moral power, power of character, power of truth, power of selfless service and sacrifice, power of the purity of the soul and of motives, power of the goodness of means he employed. He called it soul-force or the power of Truth.

This moral power of his could be seen and felt; it was obvious and visible and was reflected in every thought and action of his. His speeches and writings bear ample evidence of this power. It was this which made the great British philosopher Professor C. E. M. Joad declare that Gandhi was a 'Moral Genius'. But behind and beyond this moral power and ethical behaviour lay the spiritual strength, the strength of the

Mahatma—the great soul, the mighty spirit, the powerful personality. Like the roots of a giant tree, it was this spiritual power which fed his soul and nourished it. It was that which was the secret of his unshakable faith, his utter fearlessness, his great courage and resourcefulness, his creative ethics as well as his dynamic and benevolent activity.

Some of us are likely to say that it was only moral power and highly ethical conduct which made the Mahatma. It is true that these were on the surface, and quite manifest and could be seen by any observer who cared to study him. These characteristics however can well be the result, as they often are, of sheer compassion, of humanism, of utilitarianism, and the will to do good. They can also be said to be the result sometimes of the will to power through observance of strict and conventional morality, and through renunciation, both of which have great traditional value in India.

But this was not at all so in the case of Gandhiji. The real source of his power was his spirituality, his firm belief in and experience of the pervading Spirit, transcendent and immanent, of the Ground of all Things as Aldous Huxley has said in his 'Perennial Philosophy'. Gandhiji's humanism as also of Vinobaji is spiritual in essence; and the essence of spirituality is the undoubtable and the most intimate inner experience of the oneness of Spirit, oneness of all consciousness, oneness of all life. This experience and the constant presence of it to one's own consciousness can be called total experience, integral experience, experience with one's whole being; not merely by one of the senses

or some of the senses but by all the senses and the mind too and by the whole 'person' in us. It is called 'unitive experience' in mystic parlance. It is this kind of experience which engenders unflinching faith. It is this faith which gives inner strength to a person and guides him in his darkest hour. This is the basic factor in the generation of the all-sustaining power when everything else seems lost. People who are not aware of this aspect of Gandhiji's life may do well to study his own speeches and writings. They would find to their surprise ample material to realise that more than anything else, Gandhiji was one of the most ardent spiritual aspirants, a great Sadhak or one who intensely practised spiritual discipline, and one who had attained spiritual eminence of a high order. One wishes he had written his own spiritual autobiography. It would have been one of the most valuable records of spiritual life.

It is relevant here to ask the question if there is anything like spirit or human spirit and spiritual advance. If there is something like that then what is its nature, is it demonstrable, what does modern science say about it? If science cannot prove it, is it worthwhile continuing to believe in it? These are some of the questions which pose themselves. It is obvious that I cannot enter into this controversy of matter versus spirit which is perhaps as old as mankind. It is a controversy between materialists and spiritualists, as to whether matter and spirit are two different existences, if so what is their relationship and so on. I would therefore restrict myself to stating some facts and resume the thread of Gandhiji's spiritual life.

The belief in some kind of intangible, imponderable thing or force has been with man almost since he began to think and feel about himself and his surroundings. Anthropology tells us that even the crudest tribal people have almost an instinctive belief that there is something like spirit and that it survives man and that there is a world of spirits and that the spirit affects our lives. From this elementary idea of a spirit, it is but one step further to believe that there is some power, some presence, which cannot be seen or sensed but can be felt or experienced. This basic belief branches off into two, one in the belief in a personal God and another in an impersonal Reality. The belief in a personal God leads man to think that that power is, 'man writ large'. That man is made in the image of God is the reverse of this belief. Whether God has name or form, or He has none of them is not a very important matter. But He has attributes, and He has to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. The belief in an impersonal God leads one to imagine Him to be an abstract Reality, something like Energy of modern physics with some kind of inherent supra-Intelligence. Matter occupies space and exists in time but spirit is beyond time and space. It is eternal and all-pervading. It is at every point of space and in every moment of time and therefore the laws of time and space do not apply to spirit. From this, we arrive at the conclusion that all matter and its changes including life, live and move and have their being as well as death in spirit which is eternal and infinite.

Einstein by his famous formulae $E=MC^2$ annihilated all matter and all our old ideas about it. What

exists is Energy. The materialist stops there today. But the next question which poses itself again is, why and how this Energy, which is one and indivisible, manifests itself in multitudinous forms? Science cannot stop half-way and its inquiry into this mystery has to continue. Since science and its inquiry is limited by the brain and the thinking and feeling power of man, it has to be undertaken in the realm of biology, psychology and the inner working of the human mind. The idea of the Spirit as some intangible and yet undefined power has also to be investigated in relation to man, his ideas, his thinking faculty, his emotions and instincts and the effect of that power of the spirit on man's own mind, heart, life and action. Science may be said to be still groping in the dark about these matters. It would be unscientific, nay, against the very spirit of science to insist that there is nothing beyond matter. Such an assertion could have passed muster before Einstein came out with his formulae. But now every scientist must be humble and admit that there might be something like 'spirit' or a transcendental presence.

In the history of man there have appeared religious men and saints, inspired prophets and seers, holy men and men of wisdom, who have walked this earth guided by the inner light of the spirit and stood witness to a transcendent power, which for want of a better word, may be called 'spirit.' Many a time they had to sacrifice everything that was 'material', sometimes their very lives in order that they may be martyrs in the cause of the spiritual life they believed in. They could

not prove the existence of the spirit, of the truth they experienced, by putting it into a test tube or in the laboratories; but they proved it by drinking the hemlock, by ascending the gallows, by dying on the cross, by being burnt at the stake or by being shot. A highly moral life dictated by an awakened inner conscience, absolutely ethical behaviour in every walk of life and the readiness to sacrifice everything including life itself for one's belief, have been the visible tests of what is called spiritual life. Gandhiji had all these in the highest degree and he did die a martyr's death because he believed in the spirit, in God, God who was for him Truth, Love, Law and the Power which sustained the Order of the Universe. By death and through it, he gave life and light to future generations. It is through and in spite of death that biological life perpetuates itself and it is no wonder if the embodied spirit also perpetuates itself by shedding and sacrificing all that is 'material' about it.

It is true that science has not yet taken up seriously investigations into the realm of the spirit. There is no doubt that there is something like psycho-analysis, psychiatry, psychological and psychic research. There is also some work going on in spiritualism. But a regular project of research in the science of spirituality or spiritology is yet to emerge. Many of the above subjects cover what may be said to be the pathological or abnormal conditions of the human mind or what is usually termed, the psyche. Even Yoga—I mean Pātanjala Yoga—deals with this subject more in an empirical and pragmatic spirit rather than in a forth-

right scientific way. Mysticism too, which claims the possibility of direct apprehension of God and is the very soul of what we call the religious spirit is busy with the attainment of beatific union and does not care to investigate the nature of the spirit. The time has come when this field should attract the best scientists to apply the methods of research which are employed usually in abstract science. The advances in biology and psychology will of course be helpful since the manifestation of the spirit in man has to use the body and the mind as its footstools. And yet it is something beyond them. In fact, as the Kenopanishad puts it, the spirit is not the object of the mind but the mind itself is the object of the Spirit. The Atman or the 'spiriton' as Dr. Ranade has called it, is something beyond the mind; while the mind with its limited powers and mechanical habits cannot conceive the spirit nor prove its existence by logic, the spirit which is self-existent can make everything its own object of study by the power of identification.

This subject of spirit and spirituality has attained special importance recently on account of the advances science and technology have made. On account of the possible use of nuclear weapons in the next world war, every thinking man is morally convinced that all war should stop. War can be stopped only if men begin to think in terms of peace. That can happen only if mutual fear and distrust disappear. Fearlessness in the face of fear, trust in the presence of distrust, love in return for hatred are possible only if there is faith in the common spirit which pervades the

universe. They are spiritual qualities or qualities of the spirit as distinguished from the qualities of biological life. It is obvious that unless the mad race for nuclear and other arms is stopped, unless the spirit controls the passions and animal urges which man has inherited, there is no hope for mankind. That is why Vinobaji recently said that the age of politics and conventional religion is gone and that of science and spirituality has dawned—and spirituality in essence is the feeling of oneness. This kind of feeling has to prevail if humanity is not to be destroyed by the uninhibited use of the power of science and technology.

In this context, it may not be out of place to give a few extracts here about the subject of spirit, spirituality and the scientific outlook about it. These extracts are from a book called, “Biology of the Spirit” by a well-known American Scientist, Dr. Sinnot. He is a botanist and a biologist and in the course of probing into the ‘Spirit’ of man, he finds that the whole activity which can be termed as aesthetic, ethical, religious and spiritual wells up out of purposiveness immanent in the very protoplasmic stuff of man, a purposiveness which ‘inspires’ even the individual cell to know and attain the singular goal it must serve in the total organism of man. ‘Such a concept’, says Dr. Sinnot, ‘provides a foundation for a philosophical system that puts goal-seeking in a central position and finds a place there for spiritual values, for the soul, and for God.’ This proposition contradicts the usual materialistic jargon that the human body is a mere machine ‘obeying the laws of Chemistry and Physics and requiring no psychological element to direct it.’

There is no doubt that man has the faculty of intellect, logic, reason and man is making the fullest use of it as he ought to. But intellect or reason does not exhaust the inner powers of man. There is something more dynamic in him and they are the vital elemental urges. They are 'protoplasmic' as Dr. Sinnot puts it. It is they who express themselves in emotions good and bad; though man who is still something of a beast and though these emotions often take the form of passions and hatred and what not, it is ultimately these urges which matter. Dr. Sinnot declares that: 'from the same sources are born man's deepest satisfactions, his craving for beauty, his moral aspirations, his love for his fellows, and his reverence for something greater than himself'. It is this last urge which is the essence of the human spirit. It is neither foreign nor exotic to life and to the human being, for, the base and the ground for it is the brain. It is said, that the Thalamus is the seat of these urges and the urge to sublimate these urges into creative action is inherent in the protoplasm of life itself. Thus it would be wrong to isolate the spirit from the body and think of it vaguely as something foggy. Dr. Sinnot puts it thus: 'God-seeking, creativeness, the power to mould matter to a purposed end, is present in the simplest organisms; and in man it is this same purposive and aspiring quality, I suggest, refined and elevated far above its simple origin, and revealing heights and depths unguessed in lower forms, that is the manifestation of the spirit.'

Men like Gandhiji are the supreme examples of the manifestation of the spirit referred to above. Mere

psychology which seeks for explanations in conditioning, environments and education, cannot explain the heights to which Gandhiji could attain. The basic or rather protoplasmic preferences which led him in a certain direction can be explained only by inference and nothing else. His spiritual insights were of vital importance to him and Gandhiji has often said that he was led by them more than by logic and reason and even experience. Dr. Sinnot has something to say in this connection: "From them (spiritual insights) arise those inner convictions and assurances that help the man to find his way." He adds, "Faith in *something* is a vital necessity and in the direct contact with reality itself which man makes through the avenue of his spirit, he finds the surest foundation for a faith. Differ though they may in their interpretation of what this inner voice reveals, it still remains the only monitor when reason can go no further. Faith is thus the venture of the spirit." Gandhiji was a man of faith and had unflinching faith in Truth, in God. He says, "Faith (like that of Hanuman) is nothing but a living, wideawake consciousness of God within." (*Young India*, 24-9-'25).

It is quite clear that Gandhiji's spiritual life was based on Faith as reason was too poor an instrument for knowing, understanding, and communing with what is usually named as the Supreme Spirit. It is only through faith that the spirit in man can comprehend and hold communion with the Supreme. To Gandhiji, the human spirit is 'that moral being which informs the human body and which is imperishable. Spiritual pro-

gress is that which promotes the realisation of that imperishable essence. . . . Spirit itself is capable of intellectual dissection only upto a point. It (spirit) transcends reason and hence it is a matter of faith." (*Harijan*, 11-3-'33) Nothing can be more explicit than this.

Sri Nanda, one of the most recent as well as a very competent biographers of Gandhiji, in the Epilogue to his own book says that though Gandhiji was many things and a great patriot-politician, the main inspiration of his life was spiritual. Quoting Gandhiji, he says that seeing God face to face and the attainment of Moksha—the liberation of the Soul—was his highest ambition. Self-mastery was as much a passion for him as God-vision. Bharatan Kumarappa, himself a devout Christian and a very close associate, while writing about Gandhiji's religion, says that his life consisted in nothing but seeking to practise his religion to the best of his ability, and that religion was the main-spring of his activities. And what did Gandhiji mean by religion? "By religion, I do not mean formal religion or customary religion, but the religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker." "This religion," says Gandhiji "transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonises them and gives them reality." "It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, knows its Maker and appreciates the true correspondence between the Maker and itself." "Religion is in fact self-knowledge, self-realisation." In

another context, Gandhiji speaks about the joy of following the true path of religion, of truth and says, "This joy however, is not at all worldly, but springs out of communion with the Divine." Mahadeo Desai, than whom there was no man nearer to Gandhiji, has observed that to him the inner spiritual struggle was far more intimate and intense than anything else. In fact, to reduce himself to zero in order to act as an instrument of God corresponded always with his struggle with evil and injustice and untruth in the outside world.

Gandhiji is sometimes described as a multiple personality. That is because his achievements in seemingly contradictory fields have been such as to be epoch-making. We are not accustomed to associate saintliness with politics, spirituality with active life, social reform with statesmanship. In Gandhiji, the spiritual aspirant, the active patriot and politician, the saint and the statesman and the ardent social reformer were all found together rolled and integrated into one. When asked about it, he said, that he felt it equally necessary to apply his mind and act vigorously in all these fields of life and that for him life had no compartments. But through all these activities what did he seek? He sought to sink his ego to zero point and to link up his consciousness with the Spirit which is all pervading. It was a torture for him to be separated from his Maker even for a moment. This trait of a real spiritual seeker, of an earnest devotee persisted in his consciousness all the time, whatever else he might be doing. It was this that ultimately made him utterly selfless. His dedica-

tion to the cause of Truth or God arose out of this essentially spiritual attitude towards life and its basic purpose. The strong appeal which the Isha Upanishad made to him was due to this hunger of his heart to transcend himself and merge in the Divine. Whatever lives and moves and has its being in the universe is but the abode of the Isha, of the Lord, declares the Upanishad. He said even if all the Hindu Scriptures were lost, they can be reconstructed if the Ishopanishad survives. Such was the importance he gave to the central theme of spirituality and spiritual life envisaged in that and other Upanishads.

A great observer of human history has remarked that man is ruled either through fear or love. Great conquerors, warriors, statesmen, politicians, have tried to rule through fear, by inspiring a feeling that if anybody crossed their path the penalty would be suffering and death. From Zengis Khan to Hitler, from Chanakya to Machiavelli every one of them have tried to govern people by and through fear—what is called Danda in Sanskrit. Our histories write more about them, their theories and actions and achievements than of anything else, as if they are the makers of history and the moulders of human destiny. But that is not a fact. They cannot be said to be the formative forces of human society nor of social evolution. One of the greatest living sociologists Pitrim Sorokin has observed that we have ignored to take into account the great men of intuition who are really responsible for giving shape and civilization, elevation and culture to human society. He mentions the names of Buddha and others. As a

token of his appreciation of the great role of Gandhiji, he has dedicated his book, "Reconstruction of Humanity" to 'The Immortal Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.'

This latter category of people of intuition mentioned by Sorokin are indeed men and women who have ruled humanity through love. In fact, they have elevated human animals and made humanity what it is today. They have given the incentive to inner culture and set the pace of human society towards the great goal of the brotherhood of man. They had a vision of future humanity which would be guided by noble instincts, of mutual aid born out of spiritual consciousness. Gandhiji belonged to this class of people—people who rule through love or rather serve through love, and by serving carry humanity forward. But it should be noted that it is not mere animal love, love born of instinct or mere physical attraction and kinship, but love which is the fruit of the experience of spiritual oneness of all 'being' and love which culminates in communion with the divine and the divinity in man.

The sources of Gandhiji's basic and essential spiritual tendencies are not far to seek. Sometimes he calls them 'religious'; but we know what he meant by the words religion and religious. He has given his own definition of religion. It is that deep and ardent hunger in the man's soul which earnestly and constantly seeks union with the universal Soul, with God. The human spirit calling to the *spirit* which eternally pervades everything is the essence of what Gandhiji called 'religion'. The will to know and believe the truth behind

and beyond all appearances and above the ever-changing phenomena is the essential factor which is at the root of all spiritual tendencies. That is why Gandhiji often said that God is Truth or rather Truth is God.

As in all other religions of the world, this basic factor of spiritual seeking and spiritual discipline and attainment is dominant in the Sanatana Dharma or the Hindu religion. Gandhiji called himself a Hindu and a Sanātani Hindu at that. Not that he was fond of a label, but he was born a Hindu and he had no fancy for changing the label. In fact, he found all that he wanted in Hinduism and supplemented it by studying all other and important religions. He developed love for all religions and advocated equal respect for them. This is perhaps a special characteristic of Hinduism that it is the least dogmatic, non-convertive and most tolerant of all religions. In the words of Shri Paramahansa Ramakrishna, Hinduism believes in 'as many paths to God as there are beliefs.' And they are equally true for those who follow them. Another important characteristic of the Hindu faith is that it has always been assimilative and synthetic in its approach. Bharatan Kumarappa while writing ('My Religion', Introduction) about Gandhiji's attempts to learn things from other religions writes, 'In learning from every religion with which he came in contact, Gandhiji was not by any means doing injustice to Hinduism or departing from its essential teaching. For the genius of Hinduism itself through all its long history has always been to assimilate and synthesise whatever new element it came up against. Not being tied down to a creed or to a founder, it was free to learn, grow and

develop. Gandhiji illustrates in himself this youthful spirit of Hinduism, which kept it ever fresh, ever living and ever growing. Indeed, it may be truly said that in this respect, in Gandhiji Hinduism found its own Soul.'

Gandhiji was not only born a Hindu but till he went to England, he grew in an atmosphere which was full of influences congenial for the growth of spiritual tendencies. Of his father, he says in his Autobiography, ".....he had that kind of religious culture which frequent visits to temples and listening to religious discourses make available to many Hindus....he used to repeat aloud some verses of the Gita every day at the time of worship." In the same Autobiography, about his mother he says, "the outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of Saintliness." She was deeply religious. While writing about his school days, he complains that all sorts of things were taught 'except religion'! 'And yet, I kept on picking up things here and there from my surroundings. The term 'religion' I am using in its broadest sense, meaning thereby self-realisation or knowledge of self.' He further mentions that he learnt the use of Ramanam which became his 'infallible remedy', from Rambha, his nurse. The love of Tulsi Ramayana and Bhagavat and the seed of devotion took root in Gandhiji while he was of tender age.

It was these early beginnings in the field of spiritual seeking which developed later and continued as a passion throughout his life. He says, 'But one thing took deep root in me—the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all

morality. Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening.' (Autobiography).

If we are to express these developments in his early days in terms of his later Sadhana, here were obvious seeds of Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. His intensity to act, to act always in truth, came later and that led him to Karma Yoga. Thus his whole life became a synthesis of the three most important Yogas, Jnana, Bhakti, and Karma.

Gandhiji's faith in the Supreme and his aspiration to be one with the Supreme led him to the triple spiritual Sadhana of the three Yogas. It was the constant and ceaseless Sadhana which took him to the dim heights of spiritual attainment rarely reached even by great aspirants. What made his Sadhana and attainment more significant for humanity was that his whole life was open to view for anyone to study and there is immense literature available on it both by himself and other observers. Moreover, his attainment did not remain merely an individual achievement, but he employed every ounce of his spiritual energy for the service of mankind in almost every important field of activity. Thus his spiritual life is not only useful as a guide for seekers of spiritual light but for all those who would use spiritual power for ameliorating the lot of man on earth.

Gandhiji's spiritual aspiration and its intensity was inversely in proportion to his utter humility and the feeling that he was imperfect and was like a speck of dust before the Almighty, whose feet he wanted to

touch. He wished and willed with all his power to realise by his whole being here and now in his body, the truth of the existence of Supra-Consciousness, of the Spirit, infinite and eternal. He has described the nature of the Spirit as Sat-Chit-Anand (Being-Consciousness-Beatitude). The individual soul is but a part and parcel of the Spirit, seeking to unite, link itself up and ultimately to merge in the Spirit. To abide in that supreme consciousness every moment of his life and to live a unitive life of the Spirit was his endeavour. He would sing with Mira and call upon God, 'Jyotame Jyota Milājā', saying—'Oh God, see that this little flame of my soul merges in the Flame of Flames, and the Light of Lights'! What happens then to the world? Why, it is but the manifestation of the Lord and in man and humanity the Lord is reflected. The immanence of the Spirit is to be experienced through loveful service and sacrifice for all that is living and sentient.

Gandhiji has expressed his own spiritual aspiration in many ways and on various occasions. In his 'Autobiography' he writes, "What I want to achieve, what I have been striving and pining to achieve is self-realisation, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuance of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end." He believed that man's highest aim should be to realise oneself and God. He says, "Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities, social, political and religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God (*Harijan*, 29-8-'36).

Gandhiji started as an ordinary aspirant with all kinds of doubts and it can be said that once he was quite a sceptic. He says, "I was first lacking in faith, but I acquired it by contemplation and study of religions. It grows day by day as I have an increasing realisation of the fact that God abides with me in my heart." Though he learnt to rely on God consciously before he was fifteen years old (*Harijan*, 11-3-'39), it required a lot of time and experience for his faith to be as strong as a rock. It is the vision of God, the constant feeling of His presence which strengthens faith and makes it adamant. The intensity of his aspiration is sometimes comparable to that of Mira or Kabir or some of the great mystics of the world. We may see for instance, what he says in his Autobiography: "It is an unbroken torture to me that I am still so far from Him, Who as I fully know, governs every breath of my life and whose offspring I am." The Bhakti texts in Sanskrit describe the pangs of separation of a Bhakta from God as equal to the stinging by a thousand scorpions every moment. Another Bhakta bursts out, "Oh Lord, each moment of separation from you is like ages to me."

It was with this kind of intense aspiration that Gandhiji started his spiritual discipline for the attainment of his goal. He continued it to the last moment as he knew that there should be no relaxation on the way or even at the end. In this path, what begins as a burden and a duty and continues as a discipline and a habit ends in being the means of extreme joy and ecstasy. The means and ends at last coincide since the means themselves are but another form of 'ends'.

II

GANDHIJI'S SĀDHANĀ

If one is to characterise Gandhiji's spiritual discipline in terms of the Sanatana Hindu Dharma or in terms of Vedanta and Yoga, it was a synthesis of the three Yogas, viz., Bhakti, Jnana and Karma as already pointed out. He has himself remarked as follows: "The Gita contains the gospel of Karma or work, the gospel of Bhakti or devotion, and the gospel of Jnana or knowledge. Life should be a harmonious whole of these three." (*Young India*, 3-11-'27). Mark the last sentence and you get the idea about his ideal Sāadhanā. But Gandhiji was nothing if he was not always original and creative. His Jnana Yoga did not lay much stress on metaphysics or ratiocination, but on direct apprehension and knowledge by identity. He knew that God could not be cognised by intellect or by reading or hearing about Him. Knowledge by identity, by communion, by meditation, by silence and silent prayer was the way he followed more than argument, discussion, and logic. Another important aspect of Gandhiji's Jnana Yoga was his conception of God not so much as an abstract Reality but as Truth of daily life which is experienced. He saw and knew God as the Law in operation in the universe. He said that God is the Law-Maker and He has no necessity to amend or add to his Law. He said: "God is the Force

among all forces. All other forces are material. But God is the Vital Force or Spirit which is all-pervading, all-embracing and therefore beyond human ken" (*Harijan*, 18-8-'46). Another peculiarity of his Jnana Sadhana was that whenever he felt he was away from his God, he used abstinence, silence and fasting as the means of bringing Him near to himself. Abstinence and continence were more effective ways of knowing God than the process of intellection, in the eyes of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji was a great Bhakta. God to him was Love and in what other and more effective way could He be approached by him than through the emotion of love, of devotion? He said: "The identification of the worshipper with God should be still closer than that between the lover and the beloved." (*Young India*, 3-11-'27). Total surrender to the will of God in the absolute faith that He alone was the final arbiter of things was Gandhiji's poise as a Bhakta or devotee. But here he did not allow his love of God to be abstract or impersonal but he saw God in humanity, in human suffering and translated his love into incessant service of men in distress and coined it into innumerable acts of sacrifice for the poor and the needy, for the depressed and the oppressed.

In addition to service of God through man he used prayer (individual as well as collective) and Ramnam as infallible sources of strength and inspiration, of guidance and right action. Fast to him was a form of prayer and prayer a mark of his humility. He writes, "Ever since the Ashram was founded, not a single day has passed to my knowledge without this worship

(prayer).” He also says, “Prayer is not an asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one’s weakness.” But fasting without faith in God and prayer without complete surrender would be mockery. The faith he once imbibed in his childhood in Ramnam grew from strength to strength until he began to believe almost in its mystical power, as much as some saints like Tulsi, Surdas, Purandardas and Tukaram in our country. It was a Mantra which could work miracles. He used the rosary often and he writes, “I do count the rosary when it helps me in concentrating on Rama.” (*Young India*, 14-8-'21).

After all is said and done, he was a Karmayogi par excellence. He was a Bhakti Yogi more than a Jnana Yogi, but he was a Karma Yogi more than either. He conceived life itself as incessant action and in the words of Carlyle, ‘the infinite conjugation of the verb to do’. Though a born idealist nothing interested him so much as the translation of ideas into practice, of thought into action, of theory into a concrete programme of work. But his constant endeavour was to transmute all action, small or big, from writing a letter to the launching of a stupendous movement like non-violent non-cooperation, into a part of his spiritual discipline. “I have presented non-cooperation”, he said to a correspondent, “in terms of religion because I enter politics only in so far as it develops the religious faith in me.” It must be remembered however, that he never allowed himself to be swayed by conventional ideas of duty and never departed from non-violent methods and insisted that action should always be full of love and without attachment to the fruit thereof. He knew that

even taking a breath is an action as also the act of death itself. But he also knew and realised at every step that not a blade of grass moved except by the will of God. His Karma Yoga therefore was of a unique type and that is why he could evolve a way of life, Satyagraha, which has many unique features. In the forefront of his programme of action was tireless non-violent resistance to all evil and injustice, be it within himself, in his wife or household, in India or elsewhere. But this was always inspired by love, guided by faith in God and conducted on the highest moral plane. It is significant that Mahadeobhai's Diary (P. 25) has the following about Gandhiji's life of action: 'To tread the path of Truth and to eschew all activity—this is a contradiction in terms....To tread the path of Truth implies an active life in the world of man. In the absence of such activity, there is no occasion for either pursuing or swerving from Truth....A devotee of God is always in action in the service of others and never gives up Truth.' Action mostly spelt for him the service of humanity. Service of man is greater than learning the Vedas, he once said. He declared, "I cannot find Him apart from humanity. My creed is service of God and therefore of humanity." He had a passion for the service of the suppressed classes and he said, "And as I cannot render this service without entering politics, I find myself in politics. Thus I am no master."

The above-mentioned ones were the broad lines of Gandhiji's spiritual discipline. But he had also great faith in austerities, in vows and in Ashram life. He writes, "Mortification of the flesh has been held all

the world over as a condition of spiritual progress.” It is obvious that indulgence in the objects of sense keeps the consciousness of man absorbed in them. How then can he think of any higher life or pursuits? Therefore, abstinence, though a negative action, has to be there when the positive process of engaging the mind in spiritual discipline is to be pursued. Fast is only an extreme type of mortification, but perhaps more humane and rational than some of the drastic practices of cutting the flesh or exposure to extremes of heat and cold. He writes, “I have a profound belief in the method of the fast, both private and public—this is my fundamental position.” (*Harijan*, 15-4’33). About austerities as a whole, he says, “My austerities have an inestimable value if they represent the yearnings of a soul striving to lay its weary head in the lap of his Maker....If I am journeying Godward, as I feel I am, it is safe with me.” (*Harijan*, 8-4’36).

Gandhiji ultimately evolved eleven vows which he believed were necessary. He believed in taking vows publicly so that there were witnesses to a promise to discharge the great responsibility of keeping those vows. To the five Yamas or controls prescribed by Patanjali for the students of Yoga, Gandhiji added six more. They are not mentioned here in the order of priority for they are all essential and equal in importance if a full code of spiritual discipline and conduct is to be followed. The five Yamas are as old as the Upanishads and were ordained in one form or the other by the Jains as well as the Buddhists. The first five

of them mentioned below are the Yamas and those that follow are added by Gandhiji:

1. *Ahimsa*—Non-violence or active love.
2. *Satya*—Truth in thought, word and deed.
3. *Asteya*—non-stealing.
4. *Brahmacharya*—Continence and control of the senses, practice of communion with Brahma.
5. *Asangraha* or *Aparigraha*—Non-possession.
6. *Shareera Shrama*—Bread labour.
7. *Aswad*—Non-attachment to taste or palate.
8. *Swadeshi*—Use of things produced nearest to one's place.
9. *Sarvatra Bhaya Varjana*—Fearlessness.
10. *Sparsha Bhavana*—Removal of all kinds of untouchability by birth or race.
11. *Sarvadharm Samanatva*—Equal respect for all religions.

These vows were the result of Gandhiji's long and conscious experimentation with his own mind and action, as well as with community living. The aim of these observances is not only the spiritual progress of the individual but also harmonious community living on the basis of spirituality, mutual aid and collective salvation.

The next important instrument of his spiritual discipline was Ashram life. He must have read in early life about the Ashrams of sages and Munis. But he could start something like it first only in South Africa.

The Phoenix Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm were the beginnings. He pursued the idea when he settled in India at Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad. Then came his Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati and then Sevagram in Wardha. This kind of life became a part of his way of life, whether he was actually in the Ashram or not. For instance, even while on tour his camp assumed all the characteristics of an Ashram, utter simplicity, daily prayers every morning and evening, punctuality, hard discipline, openness and so on.

Though Gandhiji lived a very crowded life and an eventful one, though he was always surrounded by men and women who admired him and sought inspiration from him, he valued silence and real spiritual loneliness as a means for inner progress. He says, "Silence, the spiritual value of it dawned on me.... that was the time when I could best hold communion with God." He resorted to silence one day every week. This served three purposes: it conserved his physical as well as mental energies, gave him leisure to write for the Press and helped his spiritual progress.

All this spiritual discipline and the scrupulous moral behaviour based on Truth and Love made Gandhiji an immense storehouse of unseen power. This power he used in the effective service of mankind. He called this power Soul-Force or Truth-Force.

III

GANDHIJI'S SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT

Now to Gandhiji's spiritual attainments, and intimations of spiritual realisation. There are various ways in which spiritual progress and attainment are studied and assessed in a general way. Though spiritual realisation is a subjective experience of the highest order, it is not without some objective manifestations in the form of the approach, attitude and behaviour of the persons concerned. Certain ethical virtues like Truth and integrity, purity of motives, shedding of selfishness, fearlessness and so on can be said to be the obvious tests. The results of such an attainment can be roughly stated as follows: an abiding and unshakable faith in the existence and presence of the Spirit; an absolute faith in the moral order of the universe and in the inner light in oneself; perception of the underlying unity and harmony in the universe inspite of existing discord and struggle; fearlessness and extraordinary courage—the path to God is only for the brave (Harino Panth Chhurano); abiding sense of inner joy, sense of purity and sense of freedom; and guidance from the inner Voice or Spirit.

Sanskrit texts on this subject mention some types and stages of aspirants to spiritual attainments. For instance there is the grief-stricken (Arta) man, the person who is curious to know, the person with some

desires to fulfil and the man of knowledge. All these may take the person to the spiritual path to try to attain the highest. Similarly, the man who feels he is miserable in the bondage of the senses and the material world (Baddha) begins to feel that he ought to be free (mumukshu). Then he begins to strive and becomes a Sadhaka. After very great efforts he becomes a Siddha (the Perfect), that is one who has realised his goal.

After the beginning of the closer study in Europe of spiritual and truly religious life by Evelyn Underhill (Mysticism) and the publication of 'The Varieties of Religious Experience' by William James in U.S.A., certain patterns have emerged for the study of the phenomena of the spiritual endeavour by man. Dr. Ranade of Nimbhal has rendered yeoman service in this respect by perfecting the method of study of the spiritual efforts of man in his three monumental works: "Pathway to God in Marathi", "Pathway to God in Hindi" and "Pathway to God in Kannada". The will to believe is at the root of this aspiration and the experience of unitive life with the supreme is the end and fulfilment. In between are the stages through which the pilgrim passes and finally reaches his goal.

Gandhiji had his own trials and tribulations, his own ordeals and dark nights. But ultimately, he attained certain heights which are not within the reach of normal Sadhakas.

After once crossing the Rubicon of doubt and scepticism, Gandhiji firmly believed in God. He did not attribute any name or form to Him. But he said, He

is Truth and Love and Law. He affirmed, "I am surer of this existence (of God) than the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. . . . Blast my belief in God and I am dead". (*Harijan*, 14-5-'38). He also said earlier, "I do have a living faith in a living God even as I have a living faith in many things that scientists tell me." (*Harijan*, 13-6-'36).

This 'God could be found only through love, not earthly but divine,' like that of Mirabai. Mahadeobhai in his Diary (p. 244) observes, 'one who looks upon the things in the universe as various facets of God will certainly have the beatific vision of God.' Gandhiji again says, "I must go with God as my only guide." (*Young India*, 3-9-'31). His faith and confidence are obvious when he says, "We must eternally sing His Praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His Bansi (flute) and all would be well." (*Young India*, 5-3-'25).

While Gandhiji's faith and trust in God were abounding, his belief in God's response was equally firm. It was this double faith which brought him nearer to his Maker to the extent of making him feel that he was but an instrument.

This in fact was his attainment which is reflected in a number of his speeches and writings. He says, "My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being but we shut our ears to the Still Small Voice. . . . I realise His Omnipresence through this voice." (*Young India*, 25-5-'21). He links up this inner voice with divine promptings and says, "When

this Inner Light corresponds with the promptings of the smaller 'inner voice,' then that flash has the mark of inspiration." (*Free Press*, 10-1-'33). Here Gandhiji has let us into the secret chamber of his very soul and revealed its working.

There is no doubt that Gandhiji was marching from one stage of spiritual progress to the other as he intensified his Sadhana. He says, "I have been a willing slave to this most exacting Master for more than half a century. His voice has been increasingly audible as years have rolled by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour. The greater the surrender to Him, the greater has been my joy." (*Harijan*, 6-5-'33). It is often in the darkest hours of depression that the inner light shines brightest and gives evidence of something—the Spirit—which is above and beyond everything else. Gandhiji says, "It is in these moments of distress that we have a glimpse of God, a vision of Him who is guiding every one of our steps in life." (*Harijan*, 13-6-'36). Along with the occasional pangs of separation he experienced, Gandhiji was also familiar with the ecstatic joy which is the privilege of a devotee when he feels united with his Maker. He says, "The Divine Music is incessantly going on within ourselves infinitely superior to anything we can hear with our senses." (*Harijan*, 13-6-'36).

Several types of subjective phenomena and supersensuous experiences of the type described above are referred to in works on Mysticism. Gandhiji has denied that he had visions, but he has many times alluded to

his experience of the presence of God. This was obviously a total feeling of the immanence of the Supreme Spirit all round. He says, "With my hand on my breast, I can say that not a minute in my life am I forgetful of God. For over twenty years, I have been doing everything that I have done as in the presence of God." (*Young India*, 27-6-'27). Further, "There is not a moment when I do not feel the presence of a witness, whose eye misses nothing and with whom I try to keep in tune. I cannot recall a moment in my life when I had a sense of desertion by God." (*Harijan* 24-12-'38.) Still further, he says, "As days pass, I feel this living presence in every fibre of my veins; without this feeling, I should be demented. There are so many things that are calculated to disturb my peace of mind....But they pass me by, leaving me practically untouched." (Letters, P. 263).

Some of the aspects of the spiritual experiences and attainments of Gandhiji and the very healthy and happy effects they had on him as well as the ecstatic joy he derived from them have been indicated above. The results of such an attainment enunciated earlier were all amply present in his life and were reflected in every action of his. Now I shall mention the fact of actual guidance which he often had from above. He has stated once and again that his was a guided life in the sense that he communed with his inner Spirit and did the bidding which came. It was not logic, reason or past experience which guided him so much as the spiritual instinct or higher intuition. Even the Dandi March was prompted

by instinct and he says, "Like a flash it came." (*Harijan*, 14-5-'38).

In this connection, we must remember what he has already said about the nature of inspiration. We must also note what he says about conscience: "For me, the Voice of God, of conscience, of truth, or 'the still small voice' mean one and the same thing." About Harijan Fast in 1933, he said, "I saw no form What I did hear was like a voice from afar and yet quite near. One experience stands quite distinctly in my memory That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date."

About this matter, Mahadeobhai's Diary (p.275) quotes Gandhiji as saying, "My claim to hear the voice of God is no new claim. The inner voice defies description. The time when I learnt to recognise it may be called my prayer time say about 1906. I recollect it. My spiritual growth has been unnoticed like the crown of hair on our heads." While speaking about the decision to launch Individual Satyagraha in 1940, Gandhiji has said, "It has come from the recesses of the heart where dwelleth the Innermost. It is He who has given it. It was born at the end of infinite travail." (*Harijan*, 22-9-'40). About the last fast in Delhi he said, "With God as my supreme and sole Counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other advisors." (*Delhi Diary*, 12-1-'48). He was feeling miserable but after this decision he felt happy.

More than anything else however, what Gandhiji has written about the commanding Voice which dic-

tated his Harijan Fast in 1934 is conclusive on the point that he heard what is called 'Ashareer Vani', i.e. a voice without a physical source, a 'voice ethereal.' It gave him clear and definite instructions and responded to queries and questions asked by Gandhiji. This is what he writes about the phenomena: "Could I give any further evidence that it was only the Voice that I heard and that it was not an echo of my own heated imagination? I have no further evidence to convince the sceptic. He is free to say it was all self-delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary. But I can say this, that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true voice of God. . . . For me Voice was more real than my existence." (*Harijan*, 8-7-'33).

The foregoing pages may be said to be but a few pages in the spiritual biography of Gandhiji. Or rather it should be called the biography of Gandhiji's spiritual life. The many sources of the strains and strands which went into the fabric of his spiritual endeavour have not been given here. His hunger for spiritual life was intense and his study of it as deep and his sweep and range of sources was as vast. He read little but what he read was selected and he assimilated thoroughly what he read. Because his aim was immediate action on what he thought was useful and worthy. When once he rejected the materialistic view of life his path was clear. He had no guru or spiritual preceptor as such, but in early days he consulted Rajachandbhai very often. The greatest influence which moulded his spiritual life was of course the Geeta. But the Bible and

the Life of Christ, the Jain texts and the Life of Buddha also had profound influence on him. But it is impossible to trace all the sources here and only a full biography of Gandhiji's spiritual life can cover the whole subject.

Gandhiji was great and a Mahatma in many things but let us remember that all the greatness stemmed and derived its initial strength and inspiration from Gandhiji's spiritual inspiration, sadhana and attainments.

2

The Creative Thought of Gandhiji

I

INDIA, CONTINUOUS, VITAL AND CREATIVE

Even a casual glance at Indian history reveals that at least for the last three thousand years it has been continuous and vital. In spite of the ups and downs and various critical vicissitudes, in spite of foreign invasions and internecine feuds, in spite of vast social and economic changes, India has maintained its identity as a living nation. When we peep into prehistory, say for about two or three thousand years beyond, the seeds of the basic thought and culture of India are seen sprouting and growing through the Vedic and Vedantic literature that was taking shape. It is the vision and the inspired spiritual teachings of the Vedic Rishis which ultimately gave character and individuality to the culture of India. It is only spiritual foundations built on the bedrock of inner experience, and rational conviction built on empirical knowledge, which can be the broadest and the most comprehensive bases for any enduring and evolving human culture and civilization. India's culture has been fortunate in having such firm foundations. That is in fact the secret of the continuity, the vitality and the creativity of Indian culture. That is also the reason why cultural unity has persisted sub-

stantially even when political, administrative and other unities have failed and faded many a time in India's eventful history. India's leaders and thinkers have always drawn both life and light from the perennial sources of fundamental truths which are not mere dogmas or fanatical faiths which command blind obedience and mechanical allegiance. They are such as stimulate the very creative faculties of the seekers of truth themselves. This is the meaning when Dr. Radhakrishnan characterises Hinduism as 'a movement' and not a bundle of dogmas, rites and rituals. The truths embodied in Vedic and Vedantic teaching are not static but dynamic. They are evolutionary in character and they lead and guide man continuously in his search for higher and higher life, the highest being the 'Life Divine', itself. The teaching envisages an upward movement, a system of culture in an ascending spiral which promises to take man and human society to the apex of highest enlightenment and sportful activity (Leela). There reign supreme fullest integration, sweetest harmony, purest love and unmingled creative Ananda.

Giants

From the beginning of her history, India has been facing challenges in her great and unique effort to pursue high spiritual ideals. From time to time when such challenges have come her way India has thrown up giants who have saved her from fall and meanness, disruption and disintegration and shown her new ways of advance. Since the beginning of the modern renaissance in India, which may be said to have begun in the first quarter of the nineteenth century with Raja Ram

Mohan Roy, we had had many mighty personalities. Gandhiji has been one of the tallest of them. For about thirty years he dominated the Indian scene and that period (1919-1948) may well be called 'the Gandhian Era' of Indian history. His contribution to thought and action has been so original and great that he has left his impress not only on India but on the whole world. He is being studied and discussed by thinkers and social workers in all countries where problems of freedom, social uplift and moral regeneration exist. He has been variously called 'a moral genius', 'the conscience of humanity', 'the prophet of the future', 'the prince of peace', 'the discoverer of Satyagraha' and so on, by foreign writers. He is today, the inspirer and the guide of mighty movements in South Africa, in Rhodesia, in the U.S.A., and such other places. It was his creative thought and heroic action which has ensured him a place in the thoughts of those who have to face human problems in terms of the ethical ideal of 'Means and Ends' and of the great principles of truth and non-violence.

Creative Thinking

Now let us see what creative thinking means? What is it that makes thinking creative? What are the elements which give thinking and thought the character and capacity of creativity? Thinking can be generally classified as orthodox and traditional, revivalist and mechanical, repetitive and imitative, interpretative and explanatory. Creative and original thinking however differs from all these by marked characteristics. The creative thinker adopts a new approach which gives

freshness to his thought. He opens new avenues and therefore enables people to see new horizons hitherto shut off from sight. Creative thinking is like sowing new seeds which give rise to fresh ways of thinking. Creative thought is seminal and has the power to originate and reorientate the thought of those who have been following only old ruts. It brings about changes in outlook and in ways of living.

Creative Gandhiji

Gandhiji was a creative thinker in many fields. Two things added greater power to his original thinking. He was highly conscious of the originality of his thought. It was not an accident that he named his weekly journal in South Africa as 'Indian Opinion'. In that dark continent, the opinion of the suffering Indians had never been expressed. That journal was not only a new thing but a bold and fearless adventure which created new life there. In India, he took over 'Young India'. He did not want to rename it but the journal began quite a new life after he became the editor. Then the new journal which he started in Gujarati, he rightly called by the name 'Navajeevan'—New Life. He meant it and the journal justified the name to the end. He called his autobiography too by the name, 'My Experiments with Truth,' meaning thereby that he was conscious of doing something which was original and fresh, something which was hitherto unattempted. We know that it was so. He has referred to himself in his writings as the 'author' of Satyagraha. He has also said, "I have practised Satyagraha for fifty years as a scientist."

The other thing which made his creative thinking much more effective than it could have been ordinarily, was his action in terms of his new thinking. He was not merely a thinker; he was more a man of action; in fact many a time he acted first and then tried to explain his action in terms of his thinking. This gave his thinking a realism which was not restricted only to the world of thought, but brought it home to the man in the street in the form of concrete examples which could be followed by all.

Indian Background

Now before we take up some examples of his creative thinking (we cannot exhaust or enumerate all his creative thoughts here), let us survey the Indian background at the time when he began his effective career in India.

His entry on the Indian scene can be dated only from 1915 after his return from South Africa. He did not start taking part in public affairs in a big way till about the Amritsar Congress Session in 1919. But he was not idle. He was observing things and studying the situation as Gokhale, his Guru, had asked him to do. However, the significant part he played in the removal of the Viramgam customs cordon, in stopping the indentured labour system, in the redress of the grievances of the peasantry of Champaran, in the successful conduct of the Kheda Satyagraha, in leading millhands of Ahmedabad to success, in controlling dacoits in the Borsad taluka was quite obvious. It clearly indicated that he had already developed a new outlook and was out to use the weapon of Satyagraha

in India which he had so assiduously developed and successfully used in South Africa. During the struggle in South Africa he had come across several problems among the Indians there, such as communal conflicts and disunity, caste system, language difficulties, poverty and so on which were current for long in India. He had been actively thinking about them and had also expressed clearly that Satyagraha was a sovereign remedy and was good 'for all the ills, India was suffering from'. It should be remembered that Gandhiji though always keen on fighting the particular evil he came across, was much more keen on following and establishing a new way of life, namely the Satyagraha way of life. As long ago as 1908, he had given a full indication of that ideal in his seminal book 'Hind Swaraj'. We find therein the seeds of his creative thinking. He brought into action some of them while he carried on the South African struggle from 1908-1914. He came back to India almost as a Perfected Soul, a Siddha, ready and eager to apply remedies he had tried and succeeded in the Southern part of the Dark Continent. It can now be called 'the darkest spot' in racial discrimination.

I would now try to give a very sketchy outline of the different aspects of India as they obtained on the eve of the Amritsar Congress in 1919.

A number of attempts from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Vivekananda had been made to restore the pristine purity and the ancient glory of the Sanatana Dharma, also called Aryan religion or Hinduism. But not much progress had been made. Religion and some

of its rites and formalities were still linked up with the preservation of what is in its totality called the Varnāshrama Dharma but which had very badly deteriorated. The masses were steeped in superstition and blind faith as before. A new outlook had dawned among the educated but the masses lay inert.

Philosophy had its usual rounds of discussion and schools of thought. There was no adequate attempt at going to the root of the matter and providing the common man with a philosophy of life which would stand in good stead in his daily activities and his desperate struggle for existence.

With all the talk of social reform and uplift of women, the depressed classes, as they were called, were practically where they were and women too had hardly opportunities to advance. The rigidity of the social and caste structure had not slackened to any great extent.

As regards politics, the first World War had come and gone and India had loyally served and substantially helped the British masters. The nation was expecting an equal response, if not a generous one. Instead, the Rowlatt Act was the gift offered. The Jalianwalla Bagh massacre and the subsequent Martial Law in the Punjab had brought out in the open the vilest aspect of British rule in India. The country was seething with discontent and was waiting for some vigorous and effective action. Lokmanya Tilak dominated the political scene at that time. Gandhiji put forth his new point of view of unconditional cooperation before he thought of non-cooperation, but was

not successful in carrying the day. He had to wait till the Khilafat question loomed large and the Moslems were ready to adopt his methods of non-violent non-cooperation during the next year in August 1920. The Congress followed the same path in December 1920 at the Nagpur Sessions.

Economically speaking, India had been drained to the utmost during the World War (1914-1919). A country which was already poor and kept undeveloped for the benefit of its rulers was in a desperate condition.

Education continued to follow the old ruts and was supplying the Government with the intellectuals whom they wanted for cheap clerical and other administrative and loyal service. There was no attempt either at rousing the national spirit or at higher scientific and technological training.

This may be said to be the picture of India on the eve of Gandhiji's entry into the thick of the scene in 1919. But as I have already said, apart from direct participation in the national activities of the country, he had already given thought to several problems confronting India and had given expression to his original thoughts in no uncertain terms in his occasional writings on this subject in 'Indian Opinion' and notably in his important book 'Hind Swaraj'.

We shall now try to state here some of his creative thoughts which have been able to influence the thinking and action of India in recent times.

The Beginning

Gandhiji's creative thinking and action may be said to have begun quite early in life. The three formative influences which he himself mentions were, his admiration in boyhood for Harishchandra's truthfulness, his love for the now famous lines of the Gujarati poet Shamalbhat, which emphasise 'the return of good for evil done,' and faith in 'Ramanam' which Rambha, the maid-servant taught him.

These were the three basic principles from which stemmed Gandhiji's whole philosophy of life and action. He often referred his thoughts and action, including the great doctrine and technique of Satyagraha to two ethical ideas namely, truth and non-violence. He hardly spoke or wrote about philosophy and metaphysics as such. But the above two ethical principles were no doubt derived from his unshakable faith in God and the essential nature of God as Truth, as Love. It was his inner experience of God as love, and of all phenomena as the manifestations of God which were the spiritual foundations of his ethics. To Gandhiji ethics and morality of conduct were the essence of religion and truth was the essence of morality, as he has himself once expressed it. Spiritual progress was the touchstone and the very purpose of all life. Religion, spirituality, philosophy, metaphysics and all other systems of thought and theories of life had no meaning for him except in the form of ethical conduct and moral behaviour. An ounce of action is worth tons of theory, was his comment on all theories.

In these matters Gandhiji's activity consisted in his supreme efforts to make spirituality a practical guide in daily life and in laying down that truth of life can be realised only through Ahimsa.

In South Africa

The evolution of his creative thoughts began in a recognisable way while he was in England as a student. He began, no doubt, like all other Indian students, to imitate the social life and conventions there. But very soon his sensitive soul recoiled. Imitation gave place to questioning and he fell back to simplicity and became an advocate of vegetarianism. The vow he had taken in the presence of his mother in India, namely, 'not to touch meat, wine or woman' saved him once for all from all 'pitfalls', as he puts it.

He went to South Africa in 1893 at the call of the legal profession he was following in Bombay. Strangely enough it was in the same year that another great Indian, Swami Vivekananda, went to the United States of America to speak at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. At this distance of time we can well say that these visits of both of them have proved to be highly creative and fruitful not only to India but to the world. Swami went on a difficult mission. In a way, it was also a religious mission on behalf of the emphasis on spirituality as reflected in the Sanātana Dharma, called Vedānta or the Hindu Doctrine. He succeeded, as the future proved, in putting across the ideas of Vedanta, the deeper and spiritual meaning of life, and the essential unity of all religions. Gandhiji's

mission related not to the theory of any religion or spirituality but to its practical application to human conduct and human relationship, be it in a family, in a community, or in the multi-national globe of ours. Both may be said to have eminently succeeded and to-day Vedānta as well as Gandhi and Satyagraha have become familiar words throughout the world.

Both Vivekananda and Gandhiji were creative thinkers and men of action in their respective fields and both derived their inspiration mainly from the rich common source of spiritual enlightenment embodied in the Upanishads and the Geeta. Both of them have left a permanent impress on the thought and life of India.

The situation in South Africa and the plight of Indian citizens there filled Gandhiji with the sense of a mission to ameliorate their condition. That brought out the real Gandhi and moulded the Mahatma out of a Bania Barrister. The very first public address presented to him in Saurashtra after his return from South Africa begins as 'To Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.' Apart from the racial and discriminatory problems as between Indians on one side and the South African Whites and their Government on the other, Gandhiji found himself face to face with two aspirations. His inner self sought the fullest fulfilment in the form of the realisation of God whom he visualised as Truth of Life and Love. He was also full of the spirit of research to find out remedies for solving the problems of India and removing all the ills she was suffering from. He realised that he could not fashion

the Indian motley crowd he had around him in South Africa into a fighting force without removing differences in caste, religion, language, high and low, poverty, crude and insanitary ways of living and so on. We can well say that even in South Africa he was already fighting the battle of Indian unity, solidarity and nationhood which alone could be the basis of a national effort for freedom of India from the British yoke.

That was how the South African period with the problems he had to solve there was the most crucial and formative in Gandhiji's life.

'Hind Swaraj'

Gandhiji wrote 'Hind Swaraj' in Gujarati in 1908. It gives us the first glimpse of his creative thinking in a cogent and coordinated form just as the Satyagraha he organised in South Africa during 1908-1914 gives us all the elements of his philosophy of life and action. Thus the two books, 'Hind Swaraj' and 'Satyagraha in South Africa', give us along with his Autobiography, the Gandhi we would really like to know and study. Not that he did not add later a lot which was original. But for our immediate purpose here, these three books are very important.

'Hind Swaraj' is in the form of question and answer; it is a Gandhian catechism. An imaginary reader questions and the editor who is Gandhiji himself, answers. It is the simplest literary form in which the most complicated thought can be expressed.

Gandhiji's basic objections to the modern materialistic civilization, his original views on British rule and English language, his idea of real Swaraj, his means for removing the slavery of India—not only political but also psychological, his doctrine of Ahimsa, his idea of genuine education, are all very well expressed in this small book, which is almost a booklet. This contains his fundamental thought without much elaboration. But one can easily see how it is these ideas from which his other ideas followed.

A creative thinker is set with the task of changing the current scale of values in life. And Gandhiji did that most prominently. He said life was not worth living if it did not serve the purpose of spiritual progress and of realising the highest spiritual truth. He also said that unless we drive away the fear of death and insecurity from our hearts, we shall not be able to drive away the British from India. But even driving away the British was for him a subsidiary thing. That the British or whoever it was that ruled India should carry out the will of the people of India, was of supreme importance to him, and not so much as to who did it. He shifted the emphasis in political education and action from the educated and the urban population to the millions who toiled in farms and factories. He made self-sacrifice and service of the people far more respectable than the salaried services of the British Government. He emphasised human benefit and put human considerations above the machine, mass production and modern mechanised manufacture. It was not wealth which made man really rich but his mind and his inner culture. He laid the greatest stress on

personal character rather than on intellectual gifts. Voluntary poverty was greater than inherited wealth. He said that Brahmacharya, that is sense and self-control, is the key to all strength and character.

In politics he changed the whole thinking of India. He said we must forge a weapon to fight the British Raj but that weapon should be such as can be wielded even by a child, by the masses, by every man and woman. Non-violence is in the blood of India, he said, and the weapon chosen must suit the people who use it. By introducing the new technique of non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience, he put out of action all revolutionaries and terrorists, all legalists and constitutionalists at one stroke.

The bomb and the pistol of the enraged and outraged young patriots of India, as well as the legalistic and constitutional activities of Gokhale and Beasants and Dases became out of date.

Even in the field of social reform, his approach was radical. He had the boldness to preach that untouchability was a blot and could not be a part of Hinduism and that it must be rid of that curse. He never thought of cutting himself adrift from the Hindu-fold or of founding a new sect or cult, as some reformers did, but insisted that all defects and evils which could not stand the test of reason and the moral sense, must be shed so that the original Hindu teaching could shine as brilliantly as ever. He adopted an untouchable girl Laxmi as his own daughter and ultimately got her married to a Brahmin boy. This is an example of not merely creative thought but of creative action.

His attitude towards woman and the sanctity he attached to sexual relations between man and woman only in wedlock and only for progeny, lifts the whole relationship between man and woman to a higher level. Sex then sinks into insignificance when compared to hundreds of other important common purposes and achievements for which men and women ought to come together and cooperate.

In the world of capital and labour, Gandhiji sought to eliminate the so-called conflict of interests; while he called upon capital to shed its selfishness and exploitation, he exhorted labour to realise that enterprise and organising capacity were also of great value and he told them both that it is only the co-existence and co-operation of both capital and labour which would produce results. He told labourers that labour itself was their capital and created a new consciousness in them.

His doctrine of trusteeship declares that whatever capacity a man possesses and develops, whether it is in the nature of wealth and possessions, of skills and art, of intellect and knowledge, of spiritual power and enlightenment, should all be held in trust for the community which has given him birth and nurture. Only that part of it which is immediately necessary for a person to live and work is inherently his. All the surplus belongs to the community, to God and therefore must be dutifully and loyally rendered back to those to whom it belongs.

It must be said that Gandhiji actually acted on this principle and his socialism was of this high brand and calibre.

Some modern economists may well question his economic ideas, his cult of the Charkha and village industries. But one has to probe deeper into the motive which prompted him to propagate a seemingly outdated theory of bread-labour and manual work. His stress was on the removal of poverty, on giving work to the unemployed and underemployed millions, on seeing that the villages are not denuded of their wealth, on trying to get villagers employed and happy without uprooting them, on saving man from being a slave to the machine and from being exploited through the machine. It was his basic and elemental humanism ultimately based on the spiritual experience of 'oneness of being', which was at the root of his economic and social theories and practice.

Thought and Action

I have given above a few indications of the creativity of Gandhian ideas and action. His action is now history and is being closely studied by many foreign thinkers, notably by those who believe that they should follow his footsteps in order to face problems similar to those which he faced. Leaders of the Negro Movement for equal civil rights in U.S.A. is a case in point. Dr. Martin Luther King (Jr.) who is championing the cause is rated as their greatest leader. He has openly declared that his faith in God and Truth comes from Christ but his technique for fighting all evil comes from Gandhiji. Gandhiji's thought lies richly scattered in his voluminous writings which may run into fifty three royal octavo volumes of 500 pages each. What he wrote and spoke was always relevant to the occasion

and closely and organically related to the action he was taking.

Every thing that he thought and did was not necessarily creative. It was sometimes only original without being creative. Some of his thoughts may also be said to be creative but not original. However, for any student of freedom movements, of sociology, of social dynamics, of techniques of social change, of social philosophy, Gandhiji's life, thought and action is a rich mine. For generations he would be studied and many would exclaim as Einstein, the super scientist of our age, did such a man walk this earth! Fortunately Gandhiji has been so recently with us, for such a long time, and the material available is so authentic and so abundant that even a cursory study can yield a rich harvest.

It is very interesting to note here what Gandhiji himself thought after 15 years (1921) about his own seminal ideas as expressed in 'Hind Swaraj'. He makes the following remarks in his introduction to 'Hind Swaraj' re-published in English in 1921:—

'I felt that violence was no remedy for India's ills and that her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection.'

The Gujarati 'Hind Swaraj' was proscribed by the then Bombay Government. About that event Gandhiji says, 'I replied by publishing its English translation. In my opinion, it is a book which can be put into the hands of a child. It teaches the gospel of love in the place of

that of hate. It replaces violence by self-sacrifice. It pits soul-force against brute-force....'

At the same time, Gandhiji cautions the readers saying, 'But I would warn readers against thinking that I am today aiming at the Swaraj (without railways, doctors, etc.) described therein. I know that India is not ripe for it.'

He further says, 'If India adopted the doctrine of love as an active part of her religion, and introduced it in her politics, Swaraj would descend upon India from heaven.'

To some critics who charged him with a deep game he replies, 'I have even seen writings suggesting that I am playing a deep game, that I am using the present turmoil to foist my fads on India and am making religious experiments at India's expense. I can only answer that Satyagraha is made of sterner stuff. There is nothing reserved and nothing secret in it....'

Gandhiji was all the time aware of the nearness and creative nature of many of his thoughts and actions. He did not believe in repeating history.

Here is what he wrote in 'Young India' on May 6, 1926:

'If we are to make progress, we must not repeat history but make new history. We must add to the inheritance left by our ancestors. If we may make new discoveries and inventions in the phenomenal world, must we declare our bankruptcy in the spiritual domain? Is it impossible to multiply the exceptions so as to make

them the rule? Must man always be brute first and man after, if at all?’

Here I may be permitted to narrate a small but very important incident of 1932. It was the morning of the 1st of January 1932. The historic telegram from Gandhi to Lord Willingdon, then Viceroy of India, had been released at midnight after anxious deliberations of the Congress Working Committee. He had humbly sought an interview which never was granted. Civil Disobedience was to be renewed if no interview for negotiations was granted.

By appointment Gandhiji met on that day Karnataka workers who had flocked to Bombay on the eve of the important meeting of the Working Committee in Mani Bhavan, Bombay. Many questions were asked regarding the renewal of the struggle. One leader, who happened to be a lady asked, ‘Is there a single instance in history of a country which got freedom by non-violence?’ Gandhiji looked at all of us silently and meaningfully for a moment. Perhaps he thought the question was too late! Then like a flash came the prophetic reply, ‘we are writing new history.’

II

WHAT IS OLD AND NEW IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT

We often come across the adage, 'there is nothing new under the sun'. We also read about the famous saying of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, that 'everything is in flux.' These two sayings roughly represent two attitudes of the human mind towards the cosmic phenomena in which man finds himself. The first could be called a 'static attitude,' the second a 'dynamic attitude'. The famous line of the poet Tennyson, however, synthesises both these attitudes. It says, 'the old order changeth yielding place to new'. There is always something old which comes from the past; it has been changing all along and goes on changing also before our very eyes in the present; then the present pushes it into the future. Thus the past, the present and the future are but one single process of 'becoming' in the same current of time. The change is continuous. The human mind, on account of its own limitations of capacity and experience splits the time-current into three and calls them the past, the present, and the future. That gives rise to what we call old and new, though the change itself is and has been continuous. Old and new are only relative terms but they are necessary. They are helpful for studying persons as well as nations, ideas as well as events.

Every person has something old and something new in him; it may or may not be noticeable by others.

But when we notice the old and the new in the lives of great men they are well worth studying as they have an abiding impact on the lives of others. Gandhiji himself often said that there was nothing new in what he preached and practised. He said that he was only applying ancient truths to present day problems of life. It is almost a convention with great teachers to say that they are not bringing any new thoughts to the people. Jesus, for instance, said that he had 'come to fulfil' and not to destroy or replace the old by anything new. Even Shri Krishna uses the same formula when he says to Arjuna that what he is telling him is what has come down by tradition—'Evam Paramparā Prāptam'. Perhaps, conservative as the mind of the common people is, this way of passing new things as old is helpful in the process of making new teaching easily acceptable. But it is the function and duty of the student of history and of human affairs to see what is what, what is new and what is old, and to place the result of his study before all concerned.

In fact, this aspect of Gandhiji's life and thought is very interesting. From this distance of time, so much in him looks so old. For instance his repetition of the word 'Ramraj' for an ideal rule. It is misinterpreted either as a benevolent Kingly Rule or Hindu Rule. As a contrast, many ideas of his, present such a new and refreshing picture. For instance, the idea of a casteless and a classless society. A close study of all these is bound to reveal very interesting data. It is obvious that here, I can deal only with a few important aspects of his thought and action from this point of

view, leaving the details for some other occasion or to some other student.

It is characteristic of the human mind that it is not very curious about what is old. Man takes for granted what is old. It is the new which attracts his attention and exercises his mind. In fact, it is only that which is new, fresh and original which is the subject of man's curiosity. And curiosity is the very beginning of the hunger for knowledge. It is also true, that everything that is new and fresh has a certain 'spiritual' quality about it. What is old is already half dead; it is mechanical and material, without any future for it.

It is perhaps this 'spiritual' quality in what is new, that attracts the spirit in man—it is a case of 'the deep calling to the deep', as a celebrated poet puts it. It is the 'new' in Gandhiji which is really engaging but it is the comparative study of the old and the new in him which is very useful and helpful in understanding him fully. Even for rightly appreciating what is new in him, the study of the old, side by side, is very stimulating.

While thinking about the old and the new we are likely to make the mistake of artificially and mechanically separating the two and considering them in isolation. The fact is the whole person, the total personality, the integral being. There is an organic unity in Gandhiji which we shall neglect at the risk of misunderstanding and mis-interpretation. Gandhiji was highly self-conscious and always integral in his conception. He developed himself in a conscious manner by

deliberate and willed discipline. Therefore, we have to study him as such and as a fully integrated person.

India has a rich mythology with Indra, Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Bheeshma and many others as mighty figures. We have also historical world personages like Buddha, Mahavir, Asoka, Christ, Mohammed and others.

But it is difficult to study their lives as closely as we can do that of Gandhiji. The distance of time and space as well as the want of sufficient authentic historical material forbid us from launching an adventure of close research into their lives. It is quite the contrary in the case of Gandhiji. He lived in the midst of us so recently and so 'unwalled an existence' that we shall be losing the greatest opportunity in history if we do not study his life properly and in all its details.

By whatever name we call him, Bapu, Gandhiji or something else, whatever titles or designations we give him, Mahatma, Saint, Father of the Nation and so on, he was essentially a Bhārata Putra, the son of the soil of India and inherited the legacy of an ancient culture which has stood the test of time and which bears the unmistakable marks of several conflicts and vicissitudes. He had therefore some of the main characteristics of the great men of India who have made India great and added glory to its name.

Basically a spiritual outlook on life, a deep-seated hunger for spiritual attainment, an earnest endeavour to spiritualise life itself, a strong tendency to convert

every thought and activity into an instrument for spiritual progress, a genuine love for truth, an unmistakable bias for Ahimsa, a sincere desire to be a devotee of God and the will to surrender to Him, a preference for ascetic and simple life, and a very powerful urge for ethical conduct and a strong sense of duty involving selfless service and sacrifice, all these may be said to have been sucked by him along with his mother's milk. He called himself a Sanātani Hindu and somewhat prided himself in being a Baniā. By his utter simplicity and discipline he earned the reputation of being a saintly person. He kept on to a strictly Indian way of dressing and living though he had a foretaste of western fashions and ways of life. He was a master of the English phrase but he cultivated writing in his mother tongue, Gujerati, and developed a style which became a model for others. He was familiar with Indian as well as European politics and economics and had also acquainted himself with the main facts of human history.

All this may be said to be familiar ground and he had this equipment in life to start with. But as he began to come across problems and situations he reacted in ways which were not very familiar. It was under those circumstances that he introduced what now seems new to us. Some of those things were quite new and unique; others were modified forms or adaptations of old ways, still others were such as emphasised in a positive manner certain existing ways. Now let us see some of those new things referred to above.

Seminal Ideas of Gandhiji

While it is necessary to know the new thoughts and actions of Gandhiji, it is also necessary to understand them fully and in their proper perspective. We cannot understand Gandhiji if we look upon him only as a patriot and a liberator of India.

It is interesting to see how often enough we fail to take, what can be called, a total view of great men. In the Public Opinion Survey of Gandhiji's image in the public mind carried out in 1959 by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion, he was rated as a national leader of the struggle for independence by 27 per cent of those consulted. Seventeen per cent called him a social reformer. Sixteen per cent took him to be an Avatar of God. Fifteen per cent thought him to be a spiritual leader. Thirteen per cent of them had no opinion! Seven per cent looked upon him as a politician. The fact of the matter however is that he was neither only a saint nor only a politician or merely a social reformer. He belongs more to the line of ancient Rishis and Munis, to the line of Mahāvira, of Buddha, of Christ. He was a man of intuition and vision and saw more than others. He had before him an ideal human society towards which he worked. He had a definite philosophy of life though he was not a philosopher as such, and did not write out a system of philosophy. He was a philosopher of action, if one can say so, and it was mainly that which gave point and potency to his philosophy. Ultimately it is action which is the test of philosophy, religion, ethics and morality. Fine ideas and logical philosophical systems

can be easily spun out by imaginative and intelligent minds; but if they cannot be brought into action, they remain only as figments of some heated human brains.

He had a certain basic attitude towards life and he approached all human problems with that attitude and tried to solve them in his own way. Success was not his 'god', though he had the faith that ultimate success must follow 'truth' and an earnest endeavour to attain it. To know his seminal ideas is therefore necessary in order to understand his thoughts, and actions which were always in accordance with them. He often described himself as 'a practical idealist'—an idealist who was not lost in the cobwebs of thought which he himself wove but was concerned with the translation into action of his ideals.

His basic attitude towards life was spiritual; that is, he gave the highest importance to the elevation of the human soul and spirit; the body and mind were subordinate. We should not make the mistake of calling his attitude 'religious' in the usual sense. While religions are many, the spiritual attitude is only one. Belief in a supreme intelligent power of the nature of consciousness, transcendent and immanent simultaneously, is the foundation of the spiritual attitude. It follows that all human beings, or for the matter of that, all souls are like pilgrims seeking the realisation here and now of the supreme spirit. It was a picture of this attitude that he saw in all religions, an endeavour to realise the truth, i.e. God. His approach to all beings as so many seekers after truth or Spirit or God, is a corollary of the above belief.

For him spiritual salvation was the highest goal of man and all else must be, he insisted, subservient to that goal. Life to him was integral and therefore it could not be split into watertight compartments such as private and public, political and religious, social and economic. They were all inevitably and organically interrelated. He could not conceive of following in all those fields different and contradictory laws, independent of each other. Each activity of every person reacts on his other activities, and all thoughts, feelings and activities, acting and reacting on one another constitute the integral totality of each person's life.

Another very important basic belief of his was about the inexorable law which links up ends and means. They could not be separated and thought of or pursued independently of each other. They were as integrally related as the seed and its plant, as cause and effect. No one denies that the ends should be good. But in most cases man is so eager for the end that he is very often unmindful about good and the right means. He deceives himself into thinking that if the end is good, the nature of the means used does not matter. For Gandhiji, the employment of right and good means was itself the highest end. Take care of the naya paisa and the rupee will take care of itself. Mind each step as you take it and see that it is truthful and good and right, and the end is bound to be both good and right. In this context, one could very usefully read the book, 'Ends and Means' by Aldous Huxley. It is a learned commentary on this theme.

Truth and non-violence were the bedrock of all his philosophy of action. In fact, they were not two separate things for him but a single coin with two faces. This may be expressed in an alternative way. Truth through non-violence was the end and aim of his life. Non-violence or Ahimsa is active love, love madly in pursuit of truth, truth in thought, word and deed. Realisation of truth which meant God for him, through love which in its turn meant selfless service and sacrifice was both the Law and the Prophets for him. Above all, be true to yourself, that is, true to your conscience or inner light would be his highest maxim.

The Old and the New

On the bedrock of these ancient ideas which he partly inherited as a legacy from the past and partly gathered from the milieu in which he was born and bred, he constructed the grand but simple superstructure of his noble ideals and still nobler methodology and technique for achieving them.

If we want to sum up in a Sutra (aphoristic) form his ideals as well as his methods, his ends as well as means, we can state them in four words: Satya-Truth, Ahimsa-Non-violence or Love, Sarvodaya-Rise and welfare of all, and Satyagraha-Realisation of Truth-God through Love. If four words are too many, then only two words, Sarvodaya and Satyagraha will do. If even two words are too many, then a single word, Satyagraha, is enough, both as a new way of life, and as a means for peaceful living and for solving all conflicts and problems of life.

Spirituality

There is nothing new in what we call spirituality. A search after truth with belief in spirit as the underlying power behind and beyond all phenomena has been there in the tradition of seers and saints, of sages and mystics, of philosophers and poets. But Gandhiji developed his faith in spirituality most assiduously to the extent that he was able to declare that he was not conscious of doing anything of importance except in the presence of God. 'God as witness' was not for him merely an occasional and formal convention but a living truth. Having developed this faith in the spirit, he brought it to bear on every day problems of life, on politics, economics, social life and even domestic riddles. He was a humanist but his humanism took birth in his inner spiritual experience of 'oneness of life'. All relationship between man and man, man and woman, man and society, man and his action, was to be governed by this fundamental truth of spirituality. He condemned all ideas about high and low, about inequality between man and woman. He wanted a single set of values to prevail for man and his activities. He could not understand why private morality, public morality and political as well as international morality should differ from each other. He strove his hardest to spiritualise politics and public life. He would never hate any man even if he be the vilest, because what could be hateful was his action or actions, not the man. There could only be love or sympathy or pity for the sinner or the wicked man, but never hatred.

No seer or saint, no poet or prophet in human history has so far used spirituality, spiritual and moral force on so comprehensive a basis, on so vast a scale, so persistently, and so successfully, at least for the time being. This mighty attempt was new and unique in Gandhiji.

Religion and Philosophy

He called himself a Sanātani Hindu and identified himself with the millions who professed it. But no one was a more relentless critic of the defects in today's Hinduism than he. His campaign against untouchability and the caste system had features which were quite new and different from those of earlier social reformers. His interpretation of Varnāshrama Dharma repudiated all the other orthodox as well as pro-orthodox interpretations and raised the controversy to a higher level.

He was a Bhakta, a devotee, but instead of keeping devotion as a Sādhana for himself, he institutionalised it by congregational prayers not merely as an Ashram routine or on special occasions but by introducing it in public gatherings in the evenings when he addressed people on various topics.

This was quite an innovation. For him Gita was like 'his mother'. But his interpretation of it in terms of non-violence is quite novel in the history of exegesis. It throws new light not only on the Gita but on the whole story of Mahabharat and the intentions of Vyasa, the author.

Ashrams, Vows, Fasts, etc.

Ashram is an old institution in India. In fact, it is neither the temple nor the church, nor the prayer-hall, which nourished the earliest spiritual group-life in India. It was the Ashram, the hermitage. It was usually away from towns and villages but not too far away to be isolated. River banks or charming valleys were chosen for this purpose. The structures were simple and built of local material. Peace, simplicity and detachment were the characteristics. Simple living and high thinking was the aim. The Ashram was both the residence of the sage as well as the hostel of his disciples who went to learn at his feet.

Gandhiji took up that idea but developed Ashram-life in a way which made the Ashrams and their inmates the dynamos of scintillating new national life and the source of dedicated volunteer workers for the country.

Vows, fasts, hartals are not new in Indian religious and social life. But Gandhiji imbued them with a new significance and made them into integral parts and steps in the technique of Satyagraha and his relentless war against all evil and injustice.

His Harijan Fast, for instance, is one of the most historic events in the life of the Hindu community as well as in the development of democracy in India. It saved the unity of the Hindu social fabric and raised the status of Harijans as nothing else could have done.

The Eleven Vows

In the course of his own evolution and the development of community life in his Ashram, Gandhiji gave shape to certain disciplines. Seemingly they look old. Truth, Ahimsa, Non-stealing and Non-possession were the basic virtues of the Chaturyāma Dharma of Pārshwanāth. Mahāvīr added Brahmacharya in its widest sense of 'sense-control' and 'self-control'. It then developed into Panchasheela, the five disciplines. The five Yamas and the five Niyamas of Patanjala Yoga are well-known. The taking and keeping of vows is as ancient as the Upanishads. The Jains and the Buddhists further developed the system in detail. But what is new in Gandhiji is that the vows contain a comprehensive discipline for spiritual attainment as well as for bringing into existence a community according to his ideals. In essence, a discipline rests on self-control on the one hand and the employment of our controlled energies to good and full use for the attainment of higher goals on the other. Gandhiji's elaboration and explanation as well as directions for observation of the vows have appeared in his writings from time to time. What may be attempted here is to point out how the vows and the system of taking vows and observing them has been utilised by Gandhiji for new purposes.

For him Satya was not merely the abstract Truth or Reality or Brahma and something of that kind. He laid far greater and particular emphasis on being true to oneself, true to one's conscience, to truths of life, truths of experience and tried to see what could be done

about them. Poverty of India, political slavery of those days, exploitation of man by man, the tyranny of man over woman were for him truths to be realised and something done immediately to remove those evils from our daily lives.

Similarly Gandhiji's Ahimsa is a far deeper, more comprehensive and positive thing than the negative form of the word. It is, in fact, the dynamic principle of aggressive love which is not satisfied till it has sacrificed itself through selfless service for the object of love. And in the case of Gandhiji what was the object of love? God himself in manifestation, God in man, in living beings, and in everything in the universe. It was only through active love, said Gandhiji, that one could experience Truth and God, transcendent as well as immanent.

Take his vow of 'Sarva Dharma Samānatva'. It is not to be found in any of the older disciplines. At one stroke, it eliminates the idea of superiority and inferiority of religions; it calls for equal respect for each other's religion. It gives no quarter to religious hatred or jealousy and above all it cuts at the root of all tendencies for proselytisation by declaring that all religions lead to God, all of them have truth in them, and each religion can learn from the other without the idea or practice of conversion.

His idea about Swadeshi, which is one of the eleven vows of the Ashram, is somewhat original. The obvious and current word meaning is, 'that which is made in one's own country'. But when it came to a ques-

tion of rural and urban competition in industry, Gandhiji fell back on the original root-meaning of 'Desha' in Sanskrit. It means only space (Desha, Kāla, Paristhiti). So, he defined the vow of Swadeshi as the preferential use of things manufactured nearest oneself and by one's own neighbours!

In the case of the vow to overcome the evil of untouchability, he did not use the heavy expression 'Asprashyatā-Nivāraṇa' but coined the word 'Sparsha Bhāvanā'. It is a positive expression and means the promotion of the sense of normal touching of each other. Touch and contact are the basis of all social relationship. This truth has been very beautifully expressed by a Kannada Vachanakār as follows: Once you keep away a man from touch, he is away from the Dinner Table. One who is not allowed at the table has no entry into the kitchen. One away from the kitchen is easily away from one's house. One who does not frequent your house, is out of your mind and one who is out of your mind is away and far away from any consideration whatsoever!

He has included 'bread labour' (Shareera Shrama) as one of the vows. This vow too is not found in any of the sets of ancient vows. We find it only in the Veerashaiva repertory of disciplines where one's vocation or calling is itself given the dignity of being heaven itself. The expression runs as, 'Kāyakave Kailās'. The faithful following of one's own vocation itself is Kailas or heaven. A parallel can be found in the Gita: *Swe Swe Karmanyabhiratah Samsiddhim Labhate Narah.*

Fearlessness which is another word for belief in the spirit and in the honesty of conviction and conscience finds a place in the eleven vows and is very important. Abhaya has always been looked upon as a mark of the spiritual outlook in life.

Sarvodaya

Gandhiji's conception of a new society is epitomised in the word Sarvodaya—the rise and prosperity of all in society without any distinction of caste or class, age or sex, religion or creed. This idea of his has now developed into a full social philosophy in the hands of Shri Vinobaji and other writers. But this conception is something which can be pointed out as a new one with several important features. It aims at co-existence of all in society. It replaces the doctrine of class conflict and class elimination as a preliminary to bring about the emergence of an ideal society. It is therefore a very important addition to the thought-world and to social philosophy.

Satyagraha

Of course, Satyagraha as a way of life and also as a non-violent technique to fight evil is the greatest contribution of Gandhiji to humanity—not only to India. I need not elaborate on its newness. While the principle of non-violent resistance, proving of truth by self-suffering, are as old as the first martyr in religious history, as ancient as the Greek philosopher Socrates, as historic as the crucifixion of Christ, the development of this simple technique into an elaborate art and science as well as its use on a mass scale and its successful

application to conflicts—domestic, economic, political and social, has been the unique achievement of Gandhiji. He was conscious of its importance and also said that he was the author of Satyagraha and that he knew that science more than anybody else.

Thus in Gandhiji we find the ancient stuff and spirit of the prophets and the law-givers of mankind; but that spirit manifested itself in quite new and unique forms so that they could be understood, utilised and be helpful to the present as well as future generations.

3

Gandhiji's Work for the Uplift of Women

The uplift of women is a subject which usually sails under the more general and wider heading of social reform. That is why Gandhiji, who among so many other things also worked for the progress of woman-kind, is called a great social reformer. Of course, this designation of his also covers his work for the tribals, the untouchables and for all backward classes and peoples. But to look upon Gandhiji as we look upon other social reformers or to assess him as predominantly a social reformer would be a mistake. We shall then be missing the profundity of thought, the depth of perception, and the clarity of vision he brought to bear on the subject of women and their advance. His concern for the fair sex arose not merely out of compassion for their plight or out of chivalry, or out of a patronising attitude towards those who suffer. It was a part of his total and integral view of life. It was there due to his perception of the deeper purpose for the fulfilment of which consciously or unconsciously man and woman together were constantly striving. It was there because of his experience of the harmony which would reign in all homes if man and woman adjusted with each other. And finally it was inspired by the vision of the ecstatic beatitude which

would follow the sublimation of the relationship between the sexes.

Therefore, a glimpse of the basic urges of his life and effort would be helpful in letting us into the secret of his intense and ceaseless endeavour for not only an all-sided progress of women but also of his anxiety to prosecute vigorously the whole of what he called 'the constructive programme.' In fact, it was not merely a constructive programme of reform here and there, but a reconstruction of the whole of human society which would mean the Sarvodaya of his conception, the rise and all-sided salvation of one and all, of humanity as a whole. That constitutes the social philosophy of this great man who not only saw a vision but sought to beat a path to it for all to tread, by means most unique and yet successful. He was thus not only a social scientist but also one skilled in social technology. It was this which gave him the authority to say with pride subdued by the saving grace of humility that he knew the science of Satyagraha as no one else and that he had been practising it for fifty years. We should not commit the mistake of equating Satyagraha only with civil or non-violent resistance. We should not and cannot restrict the great term only to the ways and means of fighting some evil here and some injustice there. Satyagraha means and includes non-violent resistance no doubt. But Satyagraha of Gandhiji's conception and discovery is far more and fully comprehensive. It constitutes and includes every constructive activity along the line of active love, love which translates itself almost aggressively into acts of service and sacrifice for the

good of humanity. Gandhiji goes to the extent of declaring once that if constructive activity is carried on in the right spirit the other aspect of Satyagraha, namely, non-violent resistance may not even be necessary. Thus, Satyagraha is a total and integral way of life based on truth and non-violence and evolved by Gandhiji. It has two inter-related aspects, the constructive programme and non-violent resistance. Gandhiji laid greater stress on constructive effort and would resort to the other aspect only when obstructed by anti-evolutionary forces which in their totality constitute what we all call evil.

Gandhiji was not a scientist in the ordinary sense of the term. But his whole outlook on life and its problems was scientific. Science means and consists in an eternal search after truth, be it of matter and/or spirit. True to the spirit of science, Gandhiji called himself an humble seeker after truth. Science cannot afford to be dogmatic and it has to go on experimenting to arrive at truth. Gandhiji called his autobiography, "My Experiments with Truth." And so was his whole life an experiment. He never ceased experimenting and never failed to learn from his experiences. He went on applying the truths of his experiences in further experimentation for deeper truths. He was always growing and his whole life was a continuous search for truth of man, of human society and human destiny, through non-violence or love.

Being a man of action, he applied the truths arrived at in all his activities. The sum total of his experiments and the conclusions he drew from them, he named, "Satyagraha". That was the way of life he

stood for. He called it the Science of Satyagraha, the theory along with the practice of it. He reduced the practice of Satyagraha to a fine art. We can therefore say today that Satyagraha is both a science and an art: it is the science of social dynamics based on the deep perception of the laws of the individual human mind and of the laws of social psychology and it is an art developed on the basis of the techniques which Gandhiji adopted from time to time.

Recently a Public Opinion Survey was made somewhat on the lines of Gallop Poll and such others about the place Gandhiji occupies today in the minds of the people in India. A small percentage of those who recorded their opinions have said that he was an Avatar. To an Indian mind this idea of an Avatar comes handy in connection with any person whose achievements have been far above the average and beyond the capacity of even very gifted persons. One may agree with this small minority if one were allowed to modify slightly the assessment. Yes, he was an Avatar, but made and not born! If and when Sri Upadhyaya, one of those who has studied Gandhi's early life in school days, can say something about this matter, he is likely to state that Gandhi's great personality was built 'brick by brick' and that there was neither any miracle nor any 'divinity' except in the sense of some general divine cosmic planning.

Gandhiji very early perceived that human life had a deep spiritual meaning, that the body was but a vehicle (Ratha) of the inner soul and that to realise the immanent presence of the transcendent and to act always

with the inner-most Spirit as witness was the TRUTH. To Gandhiji, that was the purpose and the meaning of human existence and endeavour. This inner hunger for living a unitive life with God or Truth, he called the real religious spirit and all expression in thought, word, and deed of this spirit was to him moral and ethical. Rites and rituals, ceremonies and observances, were very subordinate matters with him. As regards conventional and formal religion, whatever revolted against his moral sense or conscience and what was repugnant to the dictates of his reason, he would not accept as 'religion'. Thus for him, the foundations of religion lay in the perception and realisation of Truth, in purity of mind and in purity of heart, and detached selfless actions (Anasakti). The test of religion and religious life would be the progress towards the realisation of Truth. By Truth he meant not merely the abstract Reality; for him it meant and included the truth of life, truth of daily experience, truth which was in accord with the facts of existence. Everything which was against and anti to this conception of his was an impediment in the way of the progress of the spirit, that for him was evil. It was something which was to be fought against and conquered. The way and weapon which he consistently and with deep conviction used for fighting evil was always love, non-violence.

Thus it came to pass that for him Truth and Ahimsa were the twin inseparable principles which constantly guided him. Since he found and was convinced that good ends could be achieved only through good and moral means, and that the relationship between ends

and means was organic, and that the tree would never be different from the seed, as the seed so the tree, being the law, he laid down for himself the rule that means and ends were not separable, and good means were themselves good ends; one who took care of good means would inevitably achieve good ends. Take care of the penny and the pound would take care of itself, would be his rule of conduct.

The final choice of non-violence, of love, of Ahimsa which Gandhiji made as the best means open to man for fighting and conquering evil was not out of any sentimental abhorrence for Himsa or on account of some natural tendencies or traditions or dictates of some religion or religions. His choice arose out of his experience of the one-ness of life and spirit, out of the limitations of man to realise truth, and out of the conviction that man has no right to impose his own truth on others by force or coercion. Therefore, when it came to the question of standing by one's own truth, of convincing others of one's own truth, he invariably chose the path of self-suffering and self-sacrifice, which are the extremest forms of non-violence and love.

With this background, we may now approach the subject mentioned above.

Most of us are likely to take a very casual view of the problem of woman's progress or emancipation and think of a reform here and a change there. We are likely to forget the whole course of Evolution and the place which nature has given to woman at the present stage of human evolution. It is therefore necessary

to review in brief the lines along which nature has been leading us.

Roughly speaking, life on this planet has evolved from unicellular to multicellular beings and the same course continues. In the earliest stage, a single cell began to breathe and live. That single cell used to carry out all the functions of a living animal. It was neither male nor female. The method of multiplication was by equal division of the cell when it reached maturity. It was an a-sexual method of propagation of the species.

Where then was the male or the female? Where was sex and all the complications that have arisen later? What existed was the innate urge to live, to regenerate and to express itself. In fact 'the will to express' may be said to be the basic and fundamental urge. It may be designated as the primary 'will' or 'desire'. The Upanishads have said that there was in the beginning only ONE. But feeling lonely or not being satisfied with a lone existence, the ONE willed to be many (Ekoham bahusyama). Hence this multiplicity of life and this baffling variety of living creatures.

Unicellular life still exists side by side with multicellular life for all of us to see and study. In fact, in our own bodies the cells of our blood and many other varieties of cells of which our body is composed, are unicellular in structure. Man is multi-cellular, not only in the sense of having millions of cells but in having many varieties of cells. In the course of this evolution of unicellular and multi-cellular beings, there seems to have been a stage when from a-sexual crea-

tures which multiplied by cell division, some bisexual creatures evolved. Bisexual beings are those which have in a single body both the male and female sex; this stage can be compared to the stage of amphibious animals which can live with almost equal ease in water as well as on land. The next step in sexual evolution was the emergence of hetero-sexual animals, that is, animals with males and females as separate individuals. Nature thereby sought the propagation of the race through the copulation of the male and female of the same species. This led to the development of animals and mammals and finally man and woman with characteristics which are heterosexual. Even so, since the latest product of evolution usually goes through the whole gamut of the steps taken in the course of evolution and since it carries subconsciously some of the dominant characteristics of its past course, we find among several men and women tendencies towards Narcissism, self-pollution, homosexuality and so on. These may be said to be biological relics of the past stages through which man has passed. They are today called perversions and perhaps they may also be called temporary or pathological reversions to past stages.

It might be that for the past few thousand years there has been no traceable physiological or biological evolution in man. But nature seems to have definitely taken a bold and novel jump in the mutation of the ape into man. While the whole of the animal world has stood still in the kind and way of life prescribed for it and is guided mechanically by what is called instinct, man seems to be definitely endowed with self-consciousness,

which leads to self-introspection. That ultimately leads to the dawn of the faculty of conscience, the sense of right and wrong, the awakening of the will to do the right and to eschew the wrong. Man therefore today is a moral being and is entrusted to a certain extent with his own destiny. While his mind has the power to penetrate into the secret laws of nature, while his conscience has the faculty of discriminating the right from the wrong, his will has the power to decide for better or worse, to use and manipulate his knowledge for satisfying either the lower animal urges of life or to strive after the higher aims of 'divine' life to which his destiny calls him. From beast, through man, to God seems to be his natural course of evolution. If not wholly, partially at least, he is the master of his destinies. Nature itself perhaps has given him the call to help it in the cause of his evolution to a higher stage. It is a call, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, for practising Yoga or 'Conscious Evolution'. What has so long been an unconscious and sub-conscious process in biology is now sought to be at least partly, a conscious willed evolution towards the higher realities of consciousness and the nobler uses of man's powers.

It is in this perspective that man and woman and their mutual relationship have to be reviewed and studied, so that humanity may adopt the best course in the journey towards perfection.

It does not require either fresh knowledge or wisdom to say that man and woman are sexually attracted towards each other, that they need not have any restraints except what the laws of health, well-being and social

decency dictate, that sex is meant not merely for propagation of the race, but for the highest carnal pleasure which man and woman are capable of and so on.

Those who lay the highest store by only the body and its pleasures and raptures and materialists who declare that matter is the first as well as the last term of existence, may well indulge in the kind of thought and logic mentioned in the above para. But those who study the course of evolution and review the stages which have been left behind and those who see the heights which are being reached by the highest and the noblest among the rare men and women, the artists, the poets, the saints and the martyrs, and those who emphasise that there are joys and delights which far surpass those of the body, and that the body is but a vehicle of something which is usually called the soul or the spirit, are bound to take the evolutionary view. They are sure to try to lead mankind along the path of conversion of the animal urges into altruistic motives and of elevating mankind to higher dimensions of the spiritual life.

Gandhiji belonged undoubtedly to the latter class of people who are in the forefront of the real evolutionary urges of mankind and it is with that in mind that we have to study his views about women and their progress. If we forget this deeply spiritual outlook of his, if we ignore his essentially scientific evolutionary approach, and if we do not appreciate his earnest desire to raise man and woman to higher levels of existence, we shall not understand what he thought about womankind, and how he tried to emancipate both man and woman

from the present day animal life to which most of us seem to be condemned by our narrow and short-sighted outlook and numerous weaknesses. He abhorred the tendencies which Pitrim Sorokin long ago vividly described in his book "The American Sex Revolution," and which Mrs. Cleo Shupp has summed up recently (June 29-July 6, 1963, in the leading article of *Saturday Evening Post* of U.S.A.), as follows:

"Blind to the consequences, mothers are rushing their daughters into sexuality at an ever earlier age. They are robbing their little girls of natural emotional growth and making girlhood grim.

"Little girls today are not little girls at all but full-fledged females with no time for anything in this life not orientated toward sex."

Gandhiji genuinely feared that there were in our country strong tendencies to imitate materialistic western methods and adopt those conceptions which were positively harmful. He did not want to reject anything because it was western. He was neither orthodox, nor conservative nor merely national in a narrow sense. His mind was always open and eclectic. He would absorb ideas from anywhere and adopt methods of any country if they conduced to the good of the people and if they were in tune with the higher ideals he cherished. Any thought or action which would go counter to the spiritual growth of the people, which was detrimental to the freedom, dignity and self-respect of the soul of man and which would

act as an obstacle to self-realisation and above all everything which went against the chosen path of truth and non-violence was anathema to him. On the other hand, anything which could promote the cause of truth through non-violence was welcome to him, whether it came from the traditions of his own country or from the west or from the Eskimos.

He made no distinction between man and woman so far as the spiritual goal and the way to it was concerned. At the same time, he was not blind to the biological difference which nature had made and the consequential difference in the spheres and functions of the two sexes. While he was uncompromising in upholding the equality of the sexes and their respective rights, he was equally clear that equality did not mean either uniformity or mere mechanical similarity. Equality for him meant equal opportunities in life. He held that man and woman though equal, were complementary to each other and neither was complete without the other.

Very few social reformers and workers in the women's cause have thought so fundamentally and deeply as Gandhiji. Nor do I know of any other social philosopher who has so candidly and firmly written and so extensively too about the problems of men and women as the basic units of human society, their relationship and their functions. He has dealt with these problems not in a theoretical way but as and when they arose and came up before him in the course of his varied and eventful life. Possibly no aspect, be it ever so simple, of the role of man and woman in

society has been left untouched by him. Whatever he has written about these matters does not breathe any dry academic atmosphere but is fresh and forthright and has come out of his experience.

Some of the restraints and controls he has prescribed for men and women, married or otherwise, seem to many to be impossible to practise. But it must be remembered that he believes in evolution as every one of us have to. Man in the present stage of evolution today has the freest choice to use or misuse his powers and opportunities. In the matter of sex, animals are led by instinct and the abuse is perhaps the least in that sector of biology. But man is in transition from the stage of instinct to that of reason and then to that of intuition. No wonder therefore that there should be much regrettable abuse of freedom. It is exactly because there is abuse and the consciousness of such abuse and the definite knowledge of the spiral of evolution that the innate sense of morality has to come into play and the will to do the right and to abstain from the wrong has to operate, so that man may progress towards supermanhood.

Gandhiji believes that it is the exercise of this 'will to right' which distinguishes him from the other creation. It is exactly this 'will' which is the power that is capable of lifting man and taking him to higher levels of evolution.

Let us now try to see how Gandhiji's mind worked on this problem from his early days to his maturity. Then will be the proper time to give some quotations

from his own writings on this subject. After that we can indicate some of the actual steps he took for the advance of womankind.

Gandhiji has once said that before a woman is one's wife, she is his mother. This means that the first contact of man with woman is in the capacity and relationship of mother and child. This is the purest, the highest and the noblest of relationships between humans, and this is the very basis and foundation of society. The mother not only bears the seed and nourishes it into a being which can face the stress and storms of life, but almost at the risk of her own life, gives birth to a new being. She feeds it both bodily and mentally and for months if not for years lives only for her child. She is the nearest as well as the greatest source of knowledge as well as guidance for the baby. Most of the great men of the world owe their personality and the formation of their basic character to their noble mothers.

Gandhiji stresses this relationship in a two-fold way. He calls upon men to remember their deep debt to their mothers and to respect every woman as the representative of motherhood. He calls upon women at the same time to look upon themselves not as mere playthings of men but as the mothers of humanity. Gandhiji was exceptionally fortunate in having a very devout and pious mother and one who rated devotion to God and good character above everything else. He had not only the purest love, the highest respect, and the strongest attachment to her but he had a kind of awe for her Bhakti and religious observances. He

continued to obey her behests even when he was in England and the pledges he had given to her saved him "from many a pitfall" as he has himself confessed.

Gandhiji also frankly admits his youthful lust in the early stages of his married life. But as he plunged into public life, he found that continence was an invaluable asset. Kasturba with all her allegiance of a Hindu wife to her husband was a woman of firm character and strong will. Though Gandhiji tried often to have his own way, he has definitely stated that he learnt lessons of Satyagraha from her! Her method of resistance to his arbitrary will was in fact what may be called 'domestic Satyagraha'.

After Gandhiji started public life and Ashram activities, many women of varied types came into his life both in South Africa and in India. His experience therefore of womankind gave him an insight into the workings of the mind of women at different levels and in different situations. Some he looked upon as mothers, others as sisters; some were his co-workers and a few were adopted by him almost as his daughters. Many in distress ran to him for relief and guidance. Hundreds who had been driven by circumstances into professions of disrepute sought his advice for emancipation. They were not only from India but even from foreign lands. He had prescribed very strict rules for the Ashramites and his experiences in this respect were very revealing to him and sometimes quite embarrassing too. All this however, was helpful to him in the formation of his views on this important subject.

He had the greatest admiration for the high ideals of Indian womanhood. If Dhruva, Prahlad, Shravana and Harischandra and above all, Sri Rama were the great Indian personalities whom he held in admiration and reverence, Sita and Draupadi were no less subjects of deep respect for him. He cited them as examples of pure, strong and noble as well as heroic womanhood. He did not agree that woman was the weaker sex. He thought that she had been hypnotised into believing that she was not only weak but also inferior. He said that Sita and Draupadi could not be protected by their so-called stronger partners; they saved their own honour by the strength of their character and by their faith in the Almighty.

Gandhiji knew that while in the Vedic and Upanishadic times women (Gargi, Vachaknavi, Maitreyi) were looked upon as equals and worthy of sharing everything with men, in later times and for historical reasons women suffered a setback in their status. There are texts in certain Smritis which make one feel that she was given an utterly subordinate position. Gandhiji, of course, rejects such texts as being derogatory to the essential and basic approach of Hinduism towards women. He would rather draw our attention to the Mother Goddess Durga or to such great female deities as Laxmi, Sarasvati and Parvati who are worshipped by millions in India as representing great and mighty powers. One may also bring to mind the significant sentence in the Bhagavadgita, *Kirtih shrir-wak cha nareenam smritirmedha dhratih kshama*. (Of women, I—Krishna—am fame, prosperity, the

power of speech, memory, intellectual power, steadiness and forgiveness). Equally well-known is the role of woman as wife described by Kalidas, the great classical poet of world-wide fame, *Grahinee sachivah sakheemithah, priya shishya lalite kalavidhau*. (The wife is an ideal mistress of the house, a good adviser in difficult situations, she is always a friend, she is a coveted mate, and in arts and sports she is ever ready to learn from her husband).

After having given the almost full background of Gandhiji's thought and philosophy, his attitude and approach towards this important problem, it will be extremely profitable to quote some of his own words in this connection:—

According to Gandhiji, (*Harijan*, 24-2-'40), "The soul in both, man and woman, is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other..... While both are fundamentally one, it is equally true that in the form there is a vital difference. Hence the vocations of the two must be different. The duty of motherhood requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active..... The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct".

He thinks that in addition to motherhood, woman is specially qualified to be the leader in the field of Ahimsa and its application to life problems. "I have suggested," says he "that woman is the incarnation of

Ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering it is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar.”

It is, however, for man to give her the fullest possible opportunities to rise to her full height in the naturally chosen field of motherhood, of the house, of art, of peace. These opportunities must be yielded to her as of right. He says, “I am uncompromising in the matter of women’s rights. She should labour under no legal disability not suffered by men. I should treat daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality.”

Gandhiji has knocked on the head the age-long superstition that woman is the weaker sex. She is not only the better half but the nobler half and “is even today after centuries of suppression, the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge.” (Y.I., 15-9-21). He says that man will one day have to pay the penalty for hypnotising her into feeling that she is weak and has to be dependant. “If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything.” (Y.I., 8-12-1927).

Education of woman must, of course, suit the role she has to play in life and ought to be such as would bring out to the full the potentialities inherent in her. Mere mimicry of man or competition with him would be sheer waste of effort. As regards the important question of co-education, he does not seem to be very

sure of good results. He says, "It does not seem to have succeeded in the west. I tried it myself years ago I must say it brought undesirable results. Co-education is still in the experimental stage". He suggests that we should begin with the family where boys and girls should grow together freely and naturally, then, "Co-education will come of itself." (A.B. Patrika., 12-1-35).

Gandhiji's ideas about an ideal marriage are well-known. He declares that marriage for the satisfaction of the sexual appetite is no marriage at all. It is Vya-bhichar—concupiscence. An ideal marriage aims at spiritual union through the physical. "The human love that marriage incarnates is intended to serve as a stepping stone to divine or universal love." (Y.I, 21-5-31). While he stresses that spiritual development ought to be given the first place in the choice of mates, he is very clear and very modern when he declares that 'eugenic fitness' is the sine qua non of marriage! (H., 5-6-37).

He concedes that promiscuity might be natural owing to past instinct and animal tendencies but man has evolved marriage as a social necessity and monogamy is the best form of marriage. "Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wrong The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament and therefore to lead a life of self-restraint in the married state". (H., 12-3-42).

Gandhiji's ideal of married life was Rama and Sita. Neither is or should be the slave or plaything of the

other. They are comrades and true help-mates. Sanctified love, not mere carnal attraction, is the bond and where that does not exist there is no marriage. "She (wife) is a co-sharer with him (husband) of equal rights and of equal duties. Their obligations towards each other and towards the world must, therefore, be the same and reciprocal". (Y.I., 21-5-31). Gandhiji further says, "I hold that husband and wife merge in each other. They are one in two or two in one". (*Harijan*, 9-1-40).

Gandhiji's views about sex relations mainly hinge on the principle that pleasure should never be the object. "Sexual intercourse for the purpose of carnal satisfaction is reversion to animality and it should therefore be man's endeavour to rise above it". (*Harijan*, 5-6-37). This may be said to be almost an understatement by Gandhiji. Because even among the animals of the lowest type such utter lewdness and slavery to sexual lust as is seen among men and women is hardly found. Gandhiji adds, "The conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man or woman's existence. Without overcoming lust man cannot hope to rule over self". (*Harijan*, 21-11-36). We know what importance he attached to continence and how he thought that it was possible for husband and wife to enjoy greater and higher joys of companionship without enslaving themselves to sense pleasures and without being subject to the curse of carnality. One may add that this is not so impossible as people are often led to believe. It is all a question of mutual determination to cultivate certain habits of thought and behaviour whereby hus-

band and wife transcend the level of the body and become co-mates in higher pursuits.

“Procreation is a natural phenomenon indeed, but within specific limits. A transgression of those limits imperils womankind, emasculates the race, induces disease, puts a premium on vice and makes the world ungodly”. (Y.I., 29-4-26). As we know, Gandhiji was all out for birth control. He never liked unwanted children to be brought into existence by irresponsible parents. He would call it a sin to do so. But he was very clear that birth control should be achieved by married abstinence, by remaining unmarried or by very late marriages and such other natural ways. He was positively against contraceptives, as he was firmly of the belief that the remedy was worse than the disease and that it led to greater evils, such as irresponsible indulgence and promiscuity. “Man has no right to touch his wife so long as he does not wish to have a child, and the woman should have the will power to resist even her own husband”. (*Harijan*, 5-5-46).

Similarly Gandhiji has very strong views about divorce, Devadasis, prostitutes and woman's honour. He has expressed them in unmistakable terms. But the one undercurrent running through all these views of his is that sex should not be a doorway to hell as it is bound to be when indulged in for sensual pleasure, but that it should be the gate to heaven through sublimation.

All life is one as also all life-force or *Elan-Vitale*. The conversion of one kind of force into another is

inherent in the very process of nature. That is how atomic energy can be converted into heat and other forms of energy by fission or fusion and what not? Man has partially at least found the secret of such kind of conversion so far as material energy is concerned. It is equally possible to convert the procreative energy involved in the biological process into other forms of creative energy which can blossom forth into loveful service and sacrifice or works of inspiration and intuition and several forms of art and literature. It is now no secret that Yoga is the science and art which can transmute the otherwise scattered power of human consciousness which is engaged in its own modifications, into the power of tuning itself with the infinite source of fundamental cosmic consciousness. Men and women have equal capacity as well as the proud privilege to be able to sublimate their downward flowing energies into rarer, higher, nobler, and more joyful forms of consciousness. Gandhiji gives a call to all men and women worth the name to rise to the occasion and opens before us vistas of the land of what is called *Anand* in the Upanishad and other texts.

Now to some examples as to how he constantly thought of raising womankind to their highest divinity.

As in so many other matters, Gandhiji had his own methods of work for the amelioration of the lot of women. In fact, it would be quite interesting to study and make some research into his methodology as such in general. He did not merely harp upon the rights of women for instance. This does not mean that he was less of an advocate of the rights of women. He knew

that for every right to be exercised, there has to be a corresponding duty, or responsibility cast upon somebody to respect the right and allow it to be exercised. Similarly, he thought that women would be better able to fend for themselves if they became self-reliant and self-confident. Crying hoarse for rights and begging at the doors of man would never generate inner strength in them. If women understood their duties and stood firm on their freedom to develop themselves, they would compel respect from men.

There is a well-known incident which illustrates Gandhiji's attitude towards rights and duties. H. G. Wells, the great British writer of the early decades of the twentieth century, drew up a charter of Human Rights and sent it to Gandhiji as to several other eminent people, for subscribing to it. Gandhiji wrote back to him that he would sooner have a charter of duties!

He was never obsessed by the cause of women. He never pandered them. Often enough he was as harsh a critic of women's ways as those of men. He was partial to them not because they were women but because they were the suffering class. His approach was that of Sarvodaya, attainment of the good of all, of men as well as women. He was not a feminist nor a suffragist. And yet as a result of his attitude and that of his many progressive colleagues woman has a right to vote from the inauguration of the Indian Constitution. Many of us perhaps are unaware of the fact that many advanced countries in Europe yielded franchise to women only after a hard and somewhat bitter struggle.

Even now, in Switzerland not all the Cantons have given the right to vote to women.

Nor did Gandhiji start any All-India movement for women as he did in the case of Harijans. There is a women's institution in Wardha, no doubt, but it grew out of a certain necessity to give some education and training to girls rather than for any particular programme of overall uplift of women.

How then and what did Gandhiji do concretely for raising women to a high status? The secret lay in his constantly keeping their cause before him. He did not let one single opportunity in his life to go without his seeing to it that the cause of women advanced. The rise in their status, the growth of their self-confidence, the expansion of their opportunities, the visible increase in the freedom of their movements and activities may be said to be almost the by-products of the way Gandhiji viewed and handled this problem. He had, of course, the advantage of coming into the field after a number of pioneers since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy had prepared the ground. But it may easily be said that the progress during his time was galloping if it was only walking or even running earlier.

Let us first see how in spite of his earlier orthodox ideas about Kasturba and the almost blind allegiance which she gave him as a devoted Hindu wife, she rose to be "the first lady" in India. While one would like to give the highest credit to her rising to such heights of service and sacrifice, we cannot forget that Gandhiji always tried to give her the necessary scope for exer-

cising her full capacity and powers. Very few great men can boast of a wife who was an equal partner not merely in the joys and sorrows of life but in the adventures and the glory which accrue on account of heroic suffering and unstinted service of the highest kind. In the case of most great men their wives are completely dwarfed or are reduced to nonentities. It is well-known that in certain respects Gandhiji was a tyrant at home but at the same time he was so only when some principle was involved. And yet he saw to it that Ba's self-respect, her dignity, her aspiration to serve her husband as well as her people never suffered or diminished.

His noble behaviour with women in England and especially with a woman who wanted to marry him speaks very highly about his integrity and approach. His experiences in South Africa with women workers like Valliamma were an eye-opener to him. It was there that he first saw how woman has high potentialities especially in a non-violent struggle. This stood him in very good stead later in the Bardoli and other struggles which he led.

There is a remarkable story told of Shri Dhondo Keshav Karve. He died quite recently at the age of about 105 after a very hard and strenuous life of dedication to the cause of women. He was the founder of the first women's University in India. He was away in Japan on some mission in 1930 when Gandhiji began his Dandi March and inaugurated the Salt Satyagraha.

When that was on in Bombay, Shri Karve returned from Japan and witnessed a phenomenon which brought tears of joy to his eyes. He saw that hundreds of ladies, high and low, old and young, were marching towards the sea through the crowded streets of Bombay. They were all cordoned off by the police with lathies and armed white Sergeants. Fearlessly with heroic songs on their lips, phalanx after phalanx of saffron-clad ladies were advancing in an orderly manner to reach the sea and break the salt law. Shri Karve exclaimed, 'What decades of my work and work similar to mine has failed to achieve, this wizard of Sabarmati has achieved by a single stroke of imaginative action.' Gandhiji's plan of action was such as gave special encouragement to women and even to children.

When one sees such a procession of fearless women marching for freedom's battle, who can withhold admiration for their courage; who cannot but be moved to respect them; who can call them the weaker sex and who can dare say that they should be slaves of the kitchen or the mere pots of lust of the male of the species?

This was the method which Gandhiji employed. Whether it was in the sheltered shade of his Ashram or the mid-day burning sands of the sea, he would call girls and women, fill them with enthusiasm, inspire them with a great cause and launch them forth to find their feet and with it their new and equal status with men.

Simple mention of the array of a few names like those of Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Amrit

Kaur, Kamaladevi, Kasturba herself, Kamala Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Sucheta Kripalani, Sushila Nayyar, Mridula Sarabhai, Yeshodharamma Dasappa, Dr. Soundaram, Amtus Sallam, Mirabehen and many others too numerous to mention, is sufficient to show how Gandhiji touched the innermost souls of these women and how they flowered into heroines in the history of modern India. There are one or two books which speak of 'women in Gandhiji's life' or 'women behind Gandhiji'. But it is high time that we had a book named 'Gandhiji in women's life' so that we may find out how, when, to what extent and in what respect Gandhiji influenced many many eminent women of his times.

Gandhiji was not satisfied by the advance of a few city-bred ladies or sophisticated and educated women. In fact, he deplored certain aspects of their so called advance. When the Kasturba Trust was founded and when he was approached for guidance, his soul was stirred to its very depth and his deep concern for the women in remote villages took shape in the form of proposals which looked very difficult of achievement. He proposed that girls should be given training in social service of various types and should be planted in villages of less than two thousand population. His concern for the underdog, here the village women folk, is well-known and he stuck to his proposal in spite of difficulties which were pointed out to him.

Gandhiji's keen perception saw that woman was neither a caste, nor a class, nor a community, nor one with a local habitation. She was half of humanity in

numbers. She was there wherever man was found. Her life was not and could not be thought of in isolation from that of man, which was equally true of the latter. He could easily see that man's advance is conditioned to a substantial extent by that of woman. If man has not advanced more quietly it is because his partner has not been taught to be ready. Gandhiji's view of life being integral, he struggled hard to bring home both to man and woman that the progress and salvation of mankind, and man's attaining higher spiritual levels of harmonious and joyful existence depended wholly upon the full co-operation and equal progress of both.

It is only the real appreciation of this basic approach of Gandhiji which can give us the key to all that he has thought, said, written, and done in this behalf.

